

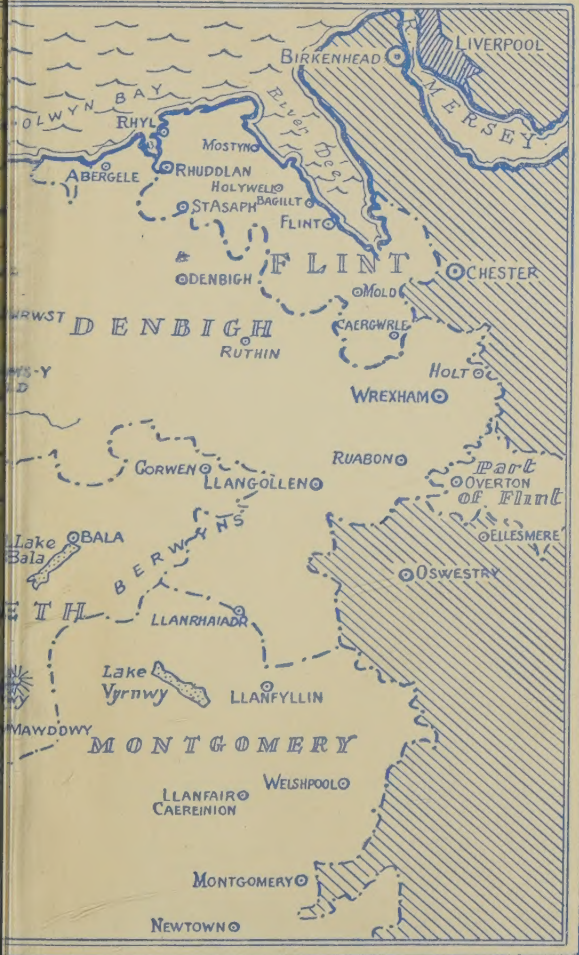
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W. T. PALMER



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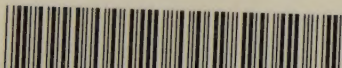
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THINGS SEEN IN NORTH WALES



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L.M.S.

FAIRY GLEN, DWYGYFYLCHI

This glen is a typical one of the many lovely glades, rushing streams, and glorious woods on the holiday coast.

THINGS SEEN IN NORTH WALES

A DESCRIPTION OF BEAUTY SPOTS, HISTORIC BUILDINGS
& ROMANTIC PLACES IN THE CHARMING PRINCIPALITY
FROM CHESTER ON THE NORTH TO CADER IDRIS ON THE SOUTH,
FROM THE SEA ON THE WEST TO THE MARCHES
ON THE EAST

BY
W. T. PALMER

*Former Editor of The Journal of the Fell & Rock
Climbing Club*

AUTHOR OF " THINGS SEEN AT THE ENGLISH LAKES "
" ODD CORNERS "
& C. & C.

WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS & MAP

London
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Note for Readers who intend to Visit North Wales

From mid-July to mid-September, the resorts of the North Wales coast are apt to be crowded, with the result that prices rise considerably. Llandudno, Colwyn Bay, and Rhyl attract the largest numbers, and incidentally offer the best musical entertainments and excursions. The weather through August is apt to be unsettled, and rainy days have to be provided against.

In May and June, and again in late September and October, North Wales is lovely. In the former period, the days are long and warm and the flowers are particularly delightful, while in autumn the tints are gorgeous. The weather too, is fair, though in October the evenings come early and the nights may be cold.

Sunshine and other weather statistics prove that the North Coast has an excellent winter record, but so far there are few signs of a winter season. The resorts on Cardigan Bay have a specially mild winter climate.



Photo

Underwood Press Service

CEUNANT MAWR, LLANBERIS

The main "spout" is 60 feet high, and one of the most striking and accessible in Wales, being within a short walk of the village. In dry weather the volume of water slides to the right, leaving scarcely a veil of drops down the central line.

Things Seen in North Wales

CHAPTER I

MOLD AND THE VALE OF CLWYD

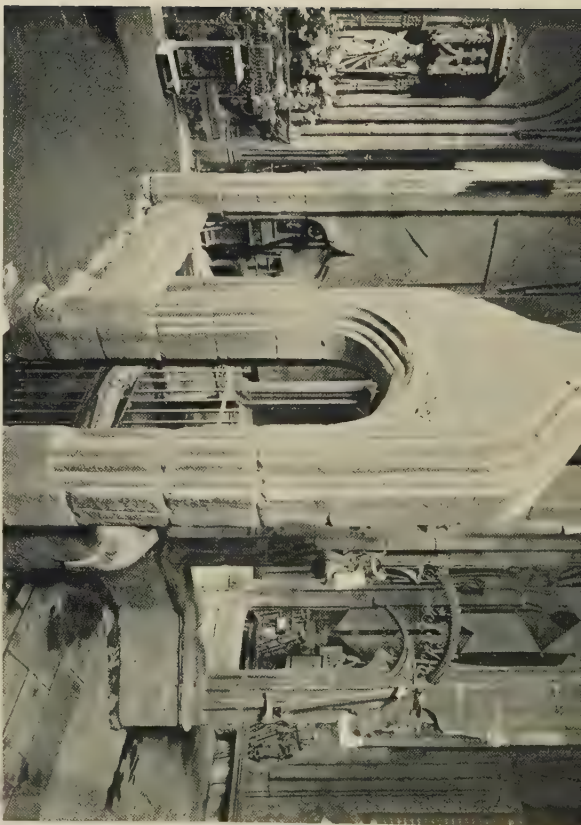
AT Chester the tourist is still definitely in England: at Mold he feels the uplift, sees the beauty, and hears the language of Wales in shop and market. The village-town climbs a ridge above the Alun, and its market-place tips upward to the church and the Bailey Hill, site of an ancient castle, and with a ring of stones dedicated to peace by present day Druids and bards, proving that the district holds its Eisteddfod as a mighty feast of vernacular poetry, as well as of choral and instrumental music.

Mold is ever a friendly town; it welcomes you, whether you come from coaly Wrexham, walled Chester, St. Asaph of the cathedral, or Ruthin of the glorious vale, though every gorge has its castle, there is the defence of double trench systems of Offa and Wat a few miles to the east, and every hill-top has been fortified. Mold is eager to forget the Border sieges and forays of the past. Yet the little place is really more

Mold & the Vale of Clwyd

renowned as a meeting place of many roads than for its own charms. It lies between limestone and mineral country on the one side, and the western hills over Clwyd, where the delight is in heather, in tight-packed turf, in open gorges and bickering streams.

From Mold one can travel to Northop with its ancient church, tithe-barn, and cross-road, and thence across Halkyn mountain, with a wonderful view over Dee and Mersey. When the tide is full, the great estuaries are blue or grey or glittering lakes; at ebb an iridescent mist may hang over golden sands and the attenuated gutters, where once the Dee was channelled for great ships plying between Chester and Ireland. Our upland road reaches Holywell, with its healing spring, dedicated to St. Winifrede, at the foot of a steep bank. The little covering chapel, a bit of pure Gothic, was raised by Margaret Beaufort (mother of King Henry VII), and its walls are decorated with crutches, sticks, and surgical appliances left by pilgrims whose infirmities have been healed in the cold clear spring. Some of these relics are of recent date, and each year sees an increasing number of necklaces, rings, and jewels on the statues of the chapel. There is a healing service daily at noon—an inopportune time for sightseeing at the chapel. Pilgrims who desire the saint's help pass three times through the trough in front of her shrine, and then go over St. Beuno's stone in the open-air tank.



Photo

ST. WINIFRED'S SHRINE, HOLYWELL

"The Lourdes of Wales," with votive offerings of crutches, sticks and surgical supports left by pilgrims. The chapel, above spring, is supposed to have been built by Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, and is the sole survivor of its class in Britain.

Mold & the Vale of Clwyd

St. Winifrede's Well is powerful, throwing up two thousand gallons per minute. The water comes from some cavern far inside Halkyn ridge, for, during mining operations a mile or more away, in 1917, the channel was tapped, and the flow stopped for months. Ultimately the spring was restored to its old purity and volume. The story of St. Winifrede scarce bears repetition. She was the daughter of Theuith, a local nobleman, and her love was greatly desired by Caradoc, son of the king. The maid, however, preferred a religious vocation, and this so angered the prince that, meeting her in a glade of the hills, he struck off her head with his sword. The severed member rolled down, and was picked up by the holy St. Beuno, who searched for the body and performed a miracle of healing. As the neck joined the head and trunk, a spring of water burst from the rock, rejoicing to wash away the effused blood. Father and prince were so startled at the miracle that they made no further protests against Winifrede's acceptance of holy vows. To the end of her life, however, there was a white ring on the skin of her throat where the cruel steel had passed.

From Mold the Alun valley is easily explored. The stream is constantly breaking through the limestone benches, and flows underground for varying distances. The Loggerheads Inn, three miles on the Ruthin road, must have been a remote spot in pre-motor days : it is now a flourishing "refreshment centre." The famous sign,

Mold & the Vale of Clwyd

preserved behind glass, was painted by the famous Richard Wilson, R.A., and shows a cross-eyed Janus head, with the words, "We Be Three Loggerheads." The modern use of the term would lead one to expect a triangular duel, not a squinting match. Loggerheads Inn is the best point for reaching the upper Alun, or for the Leet Walk; a small park in its vicinity is dedicated as an open space "for ever," a boon to visitors.

The Leet Walk is a fine ramble down to Rhydymwyn, on the east side of the stream. At first there are clear waters and pretty woods, then the rivulet disappears. In a mile the track rises some 50 feet above the reappeared stream, and is cut out of the limestone cliff with a deep declivity below. There are grand views, especially early in the day when the sunshine fills the coves of Moel Famau (1820 feet), king of the hills of Clwyd. Beyond Pantymwyn there is further terrace formation, and wonderful colour of water and woodland, of cliff and distant mountain.

The best way from Mold to the top of Moel Famau, in my opinion, is by the bridge beyond Pantymwyn and Cilcain, returning to Loggerheads Inn by a direct path, or continuing further along the ridge. The carved wooden roof of Cilcain church does not exactly fit its place; legend has it that the entire material was brought, after the Dissolution, from Basingwerk Abbey near Flint. The approach to Moel Famau, a

Mold & the Vale of Clwyd

veritable peak as seen from Cilcain, is across a deep narrow valley, and up a good track which, beyond a reservoir, is steep enough to be hard work. The actual top is masked by outer ridges for quite a considerable space, and the great panorama, over the entire Vale of Clwyd, from Moel Gamelin twenty-five miles to the sea at Rhyl, backed by the moors of Elwy and the ridges of Snowdonia, is a real surprise. The big jumble of stones is the Jubilee Tower, erected in 1810 in honour of King George III and wrecked by storm in 1862.

The Clwydian Hills, from Prestatyn to Ruabon, have been the inner wall of defence for North Wales. Half the peaks of the whole range are topped by ancient camps or triple rings of entrenchment. Foel Fenlli (1676 feet), to the south of Moel Fammau, has an immense fortress on its summit: it guards the best pass from English Chester to Welsh Ruthin. My favourite return from Moel Fammau is to the Bwlch-Pen-Barras, over Fenlli, and across ridge after ridge to Llanarmon or Bwlchgwyn.

From Mold there is road and rail by Rhydymwyn to the lower vale of Clwyd, with its famous points of Caerwys, where early Eisteddfodau were held in 1523 and 1567 (Queen Elizabeth's charter is at Mostyn Hall), of Denbigh, St. Asaph, Rhuddlan, and Rhyl. The road turns off before Denbigh, but passes the other places named. St. Asaph has an ancient and noble cathedral, now the seat

Mold & the Vale of Clwyd

of the Archbishop of Wales, a neat, plain-looking building with a heavy square tower in the centre, and some beautiful stained glass. It was burnt down for the last time by Owen Glyndwr in 1402, and was rebuilt in the prevailing Early English style. Rhuddlan's castle is one of King Edward's earlier and rougher efforts, like Flint—it is a ruin with great drum towers, mighty curtain walls, but without the elaboration which make Conway and Carnarvon at once magnificent in appearance, simple to dwell in for a soldier, imposing enough for a prince, and easy to defend. Denbigh, a few miles off, is a better castle, but Ruthin, miles up the vale, has been so rebuilt that little remains of the original fortress which guarded “the granary of Wales” against the incursions of a Llewelyn or a Glyndwr across the great moors. At Rhuddlan was published the famous enactment of Edward I which secured for conquered Wales such a measure of security and freedom. And it was to Rhuddlan that message was brought to Edward of a son's birth at Carnarvon Castle—the prince who could not speak a word of English, who was of blameless life, and whom the Welsh chieftains had to accept as the King's governor.

The Vale of Clwyd is rich, fertile, and in that way beautiful; there are scores of flowery lanes and tracks leading into sweet, concealed recesses. Away beyond Ruthin the head breaks into half a dozen little glens, each of which is worth ex-

Mold & the Vale of Clwyd

ploration. The wanderer may listen to the lore of ffynnonau or wells, many of blessing, some of healing, others of petrifying powers, one at least of cursing. The ancient Welsh used to marry in chapels over wells ; other springs are sacred to animals or reserved for the washing of the dead. Splendid poplars surrounding farms are the rule in Clwyd, until one reaches the very edge of the mountains. The angling footpaths which follow the Elwy from St. Asaph or Denbigh are alluring, but one must not forget that the first real road west out of the gorge is at Llanfair Talhaiarn, where a motor bus service connects with Llanrwst, Abergele, and the coast. Nor must one forget that where every prospect pleases in the Vale of Clwyd, the rule that only man is vile remains. Only suspicious and unworthy persons, no matter their nationality, could have crowded together those cottages, shops, and hills to make the wee awkward towns of Denbigh, St. Asaph, or Ruthin ! The motorist or motor-cyclist in particular will agree with these remarks, for progress round their awkward corners is anxious. However, let us be fair : the forefathers of Clwyd had problems of their own, and open sweeping roads would have rendered their homes incapable of defence.

The western moors beyond Clwyd are grand, exhilarating, but lonely ; from Denbigh one can face twenty-five miles of wild track to Llanrwst, and even further and wilder going to Pentre

Mold & the Vale of Clwyd

Voelas, with fords and stepping-stones across the streams, and the sight of black Welsh cattle and sheep on the way. The little wayside inns here are eminently national, welcoming strangers without effusion and parting with them, sometimes, with a willingness which shows that the strain of studying and addressing the English guest is considerable. Many of these moorland roads can be traversed by small, handy cars, but care has to be taken against marsh and flood. An hour of rain, raising a mere trickle across the road to a yard-deep ford through racing waters, may cut off the party from their base hotel for the best part of a day. The little streams of the moors are a delight to the angler who is satisfied with small and sweet trout.

CHAPTER II

LLANDUDNO, GREAT ORME, AND THE HOLIDAY COAST

MOLD and the Vale of Clwyd are places of Wales and Welshmen; the "Holiday Coast" has been claimed as the English fore-shore. The North Walian declares that it is an alien fringe without a word of the magical tongue in market or shop. So far as the purely summer resorts are concerned he may be right, but the quarrying villages have many Welsh families, and there are annual Eisteddfodau at every town along the coast. The coast-line has little history: it is low and sandy, for the most part, and the towns and villages are of modern erection. The air is bracing, the tides are clean, and the sands gloriously safe for bathing in most places. In summer there are the usual entertainers and entertainments, motoring and sight-seeing; in winter the whole string of villages has an eager and waiting air—the crowds of summer are absolutely necessary to their existence.

The more interesting places for the rambler are away from the shore. Except at the difficult entrance to the Clwyd there is no safe anchorage for fishing craft along the coast. Prestatyn is

Holiday Coast

under the lee of the Clwydian Hills ; Dyserth, its inland neighbour, was once guardian of the outer pass to Flint, Chester and England, and a castle was built there by the English. Llewelyn ap Gruffyd was displeased, and in 1261 he descended on the fortress with such fury that only the site remains, a platform with fine views up the vale and along the sands. The Edwardian chain of fortresses, Ruthin, Denbigh, and Rhuddlan, stand further west, the lowest guarding the tidal ford of Clwyd, the whole menacing from close quarters the wheat lands of the vale. The Newmarket, on the Holywell road from Dyserth, claims to have been a racing centre long before Welsh and Scots sent Englishmen to find good gallops on the Cambridgeshire downs. There is little authority for the story that the "Derby" was first run here. Leasowe in Wirral, and a course in the Isle of Man, have better claims.

Except for its sands and shingles, the country round the Clwyd shore is featureless. The hills are too far away to be more than a fringe to the Morfa Rhuddlan. At Pensarn, however, the moors approach the shore, and there are steep wooded rises beyond a narrow strip of cultivation. Though only a mile from the holiday shore, Abergele is definitely Welsh, and beyond it is St. George's village with its horse well and the "deer park" of Kinnel. St. George used to show a spur of great size (a relic of Oliver Cromwell, according to local wiseacres), and its church pasture was

Holiday Coast

the scene of the patron saint's great battle with the dragon. The hoof-prints of the steed are still stamped on the coping of the church well, where, red-hot from the scrimmage, the victor took a drink—and provided horse medicine for all years to come.

The “Marble Church” of Bodelwyddan is near enough to attract visitors ; the interior is remarkably beautiful, containing a profusion of stained glass, with carvings in oak and Caen stone, and marbles from Belgium, Italy, Languedoc, Derbyshire, and Anglesey. The graceful spire is 200 feet high, and on days when the moors are touched with mist it is easily seen by shipping crossing Liverpool Bay. The church was built by Lady Willoughby de Broke in 1859–60. To the south of its chancel are the graves of the Canadian soldiers who died in the great Kinnel war-camp.

Alongshore the shingles are, in high summer, practically lined with huts, shanties, bungalows, refreshment tents, and booths—mile after mile. We are a hungry and a thirsty nation, especially at holiday times. Gwrych Castle is imposing in effect, for many of the towers and walls are not part of the modern mansion at all, but tricks of the architect's humour. One does not like to be critical of Welsh caves, but as a rule they are smaller and less interesting than their descriptions. Cefn yr Ogof, above Gwrych, is quite shallow, but the view from its cliff is glorious.

Holiday Coast

Beyond Llandulas, where a poor road leads up the narrow Dulas glen, and to the Conway river at Tal-y-Cafn, there are limestone quarries, works, and jetties. The road over Penmaen Rhos Head (through which the railway dives by tunnel) impressed Dr. Johnson in 1774: "the path is so narrow and unprotected that few persons dare trust themselves upon their horses on it." To-day there is no sign of such peril. The next bay is that of Colwyn, the pride of this coast, and along its shores are linked three or four villages. They must spread east and west, because there is no more room between sea and cliff than a mere trifle of a quarter of a mile. One is occasionally invited to compare the bays at Colwyn, Llandudno, and Criccieth—which is finest? They are really widely distinctive. Criccieth has a south aspect and purple waters; Colwyn is very shapely within its horns; Llandudno has two giant guardians, the Great and Little Ormes. The visitor must visit each and choose for himself.

To the road-user Colwyn is only a street: the cliff roads are few and seem almost impassable, and one must run west to Conway or east to Abergele if one would explore the interior of the land. Llandudno, on its peninsula, has the same difficulty, but it has the unique Marine Drive, of four miles, round Great Orme's Head, the glory of which is not exhausted in one run or two. For railway trips, Llandudno is less reasonable than

Holiday Coast

Colwyn Bay ; there is always (almost) a change at the Junction opposite Conway Castle. In passing through the holiday zone, no hotels have been mentioned by name. In the busy season the best places are always in demand, and arrangements may have to be made weeks in advance. There are, however, scores of good places in every village along the shore, and rooms can always be obtained if one is inclined to make full inquiry. The ordinary hotel proprietor in Wales has not attained the high excellence of the Swiss ; he finds catering difficult, and almost all the shore prices run somewhat high during the season. Electricity and similar conveniences are commonplace even in small villages, an advantage which tends to greater ease and comfort. On the whole, compared with the English Lakes and Scotland, the Welsh resorts have little to fear except their own taste in vulgarising entertainments and arrangements. If they desire the " mass " holiday folk, they will not obtain the better-paying " class " at the same time.

The great bay of Llandudno, between the Great and Little Ormes, is really the finest place on our holiday coast. The town, which has about twenty thousand inhabitants in March, must have at least seven times that number in August. The whole place is given over to visitors. The town stands on a shingly flat, over which the wind sweeps either from the Conway estuary or from the open sea, so there is always a bracing air at

Holiday Coast

Llandudno. Its esplanade is guarded by a belt of shingle, but at ebb there are miles of firm sands. This shore is somewhat exposed: even in summer, a lively north wind may prevent the launch of small boats on the bay, and the steamers from Douglas and Liverpool may not be able to approach the pier. In that case, the last-named lands its passengers at Bangor, down in Menai Straits. As Llandudno is built on a flat between the two Ormes, with water frontage east and west, it is possible that sometime in the future more boats will be moored on the west or Conway shore when the wind blows dead into the open bay. The Conway shore is apparently suitable; the channel is permanent, and schooners and coasters, as well as yachts, come up to good anchorages off Deganwy and Conway. But the distance to be travelled behind the Lavan Sands to the open sea is sometimes considerable—when the tide is out, there is river as far as Gogarth.

Llandudno is the first place on the holiday coast where boating is really interesting, and few resorts have cliff scenery to equal the Great and Little Orme headlands. In Devonshire you have miles of cliff and a few bays, but here there is just sufficient of great rocks to give a real relief to roaming beyond the bay. Less adventurous folk naturally prefer to voyage east toward the Rhos or Little Orme promontory, and there look up from the waves to a cliff which is being rapidly



Photo

Frith

GREAT ORME'S HEAD, LLANDUDNO

This shows the entrance to the wonderful marine drive which follows a ledge above the sea and gives thrilling vertical views to the surges. The foreground is part of the Happy Valley Gardens, one of the most beautiful pleasure-grounds in Britain, certainly in Wales.

Holiday Coast

quarried away. The boatmen point out a recess where a Catholic priest, in the days of repression, hid awhile from his pursuers: his refuge was ultimately betrayed by the tiny plume of smoke which arose at dawn from his fire.

Off Great Orme the water is deeper, the tidal rips and sea-currents distinctly lively, and the cliffs are wild in the extreme. These limestone benches resist wind and wave pretty well, though each year some fragment of rock breaks away, and falls into the sea to be pounded to sand by the heavy surges. There is excellent sea-fishing under Great Orme, but more delightful is the bird-life of the ledges. The average holiday maker is unfortunate, for he comes too late to find the cliff-dwellers at their nesting vocations. A late Whitsuntide may catch nesting time, but by August parents and young broods of puffins and guillemots and razorbills have taken to the sea, and the young gulls are emancipated from their cliff homes. One sees and hears hundreds of gulls, laughing, screaming, yelling, as though our amiable patrol beneath the cliff was a desperate raid for eggs or downy chicks. The black cormorants, dwellers on the reefs and lower ledges, are far less noisy and less pretty. One is almost dazzled by the flash of a gull's wing in the sunshine, but these cormorants stand, black as soot, with meagre wings outspread and plumage loose and untidy to the sunshine and drying wind, until the boat comes near. Then, with silent

Holiday Coast

swiftness, they slide down into the deep clear water to bob up unconcernedly two hundred yards away.

Various rifts in Great Orme have been called "caves," and the boat is sometimes brought quite close to Hornby Cave, in which a ship was battered to pieces, unseen by possible rescuers, and only one man escaped by climbing the great rift above. In another cove, an eccentric man of property had a little summer house hanging over the roaring surge; perhaps it was the same person who decreed that a steward, found guilty of irregular accounts, should pass the period of two tides, exposed without clothes, on the lowermost ledge of a cave of Great Orme.

Llandudno is greatly favoured by sea-anglers; there is plenty of good fishing in the bay for coal fish and other choice morsels, while off shore there is great excellent sport with mackerel. Greater fish are taken near the cliffs, and a night after conger, which run from twenty to one hundred pounds, can be exciting—it is always a great experience. The mighty skates and rays are usually out in deep water during the summer months. The Conway side of Llandudno is probably the better place for all sorts of sea-fishing, as the brackish water attracts many of the ground-dwelling types.

As a town Llandudno has little history, and its buildings, while clean and charming in their way, cannot claim architectural excellence. The

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streets are straight and well designed for the purpose of housing a great seasonal population. The prosperity of the place has been gradual and unchecked. The Marine Parade is about a mile long, and the pier, set at a barnacle angle to the lower rocks of Great Orme, is an agreeable promenade for those whose chief delight on holiday is to watch other people arrive and depart by steamer.

The town's greatest possessions are the "Happy Valley," a set of lawns and gardens rising tier above tier to the open pastures of Great Orme's Head, and the Marine Drive, which passes along ledges cut in the limestone wall, high above the sea. Early in the day, and again at evening, this is a wonder walk; at the other hours, motor-cars are apt to be numerous, and are frequently driven round the sharp corners at high speed. Motor cyclists in particular seem to be unable to keep their engines in sober mood, and jazz along in alarming fashion.

The drive opens at a toll gate past the foot of the "Happy Valley," and is about four miles in length—here the foot passengers go free and the motorists pay. Up, ever up, winds the road; gulls scream and wheel about, and at times there is a sheer drop to the sea beyond a low protecting wall. The cliff facing north is often golden with flowers and seeds of the wild cabbage; after the first mile there is a steep rise to the corner where Great Orme light flashes its nightly signal

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across Liverpool Bay. On a dark clear evening, it is possible to see the lights on Lynas Head to the west, and the lightships within the Mersey Bar, seven miles from Liverpool, in the other direction. The little coast towns are clusters of fire-flies, and here and there, in the wide dark expanse of sea, one watches the soft moving lights of ships great and small, red and green glows steadily passing on their lawful occasions.

Near the lighthouse there are great rifts down which one sees the surf rising and falling, like cotton wool, with just a soft hush of distant sound, toy boats sliding this way and that on the blue-sea glass, and tiny black arrow points of cormorants flying to and from their reefs. The gulls are a flicker of snowflakes in the depths, but now and again a blackback, in its uniform of deep slate and pure grey, floats up to the lightkeepers' cottages, hovers over the road, and maybe drops to the flower-spangled turf of the ledges before giving vent to a decisive scream and falling away in flight.

The road runs round a corner or two, and there the outlook is less austere—Puffin Island, the great bosom of Lavan Sands beneath which, they say, lies a drowned Welsh kingdom, the blue river of Menai, and the front of Penmaenmawr mountain frowning above a little belt of grass, timber, and villages. Above that is a great moor which leads to some of the highest and wildest country in Wales, the district of the two Carnedds.

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The drive now descends steeply toward the trifling ruins which are all that remain of Gogarth Abbey, and there are sharp corners just as the view up the Conway to Deganwy and the bridges opens out. The view across the Lavan Sands and to Anglesey is always fine indeed.

The whole of Great Orme, outside pastures and a few house-enclosures, seems practically open to the public and forms an excellent resting ground for eyes and bodies tired by city life. The Happy Valley gardens should be climbed, and a steep route forward, almost like a stair, followed past an ancient cromlech or rocking stone, and to the little church of St. Tudno. This primitive place was built to serve the religious needs of the few farmers and shepherds of Great Orme, centuries before Llandudno was ever heard of, and still remains the "parish" or mother church of the whole district. For long years it was in ruins, but is now restored. Even in summer it is dark within, for the long north wall has practically no windows, and the west a mere lancet or two. Fierce winter storms have dictated the design.

In summer services are held outdoor, and a stone pulpit has been placed against the south wall for the purpose. Thousands come up here on a fine Sunday afternoon ; there is, however, little that is characteristic of the Welsh in the service, as English visitors much outnumber the natives. To hear Welsh voices singing their Welsh hymns

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one must retire to quiet little villages away among the moors—and the experience is decidedly worth the trouble.

The top of Great Orme's Head is grassy, with splintered limestone lying in all directions; golf is played, and there is an hotel to which the cable-way brings up thousands by a steep esca-lade from the town-level. Personally one has never used, nor yet desired, the contrivance, but undoubtedly it assists many to climb to the great rock ridge who otherwise would not walk there. There is a glorious view. The Isle of Man and Snaefell are visible to the north, and the great Atlantic liners which cross Liverpool Bay. Some of the hills of highest Lancashire are visible, and, of course, the whole coast to Bidston Hill in Cheshire on the one hand, and cliff beyond cliff of Anglesey on the other. The great ranges of Clwyd, the moors beyond that vale and the Conway, are visible, with a gigantic background, a crumpled mass of peaks, leading into the heart of Snowdonia. There are scores of tracks and roads and paths by which one may descend, steeply and warily, to the level of the town.

No mention of the Orme district is complete without some words about Deganwy, which lies nearer the Conway bridges, and is one of the prettiest seaside places in Wales. There is a railway station, of course, but my journeys on foot have always been along the shingly beach, with



Photo

PASS OF NANT FFRANCON

Valentia

A striking view along Telford's old coach road to Hozyhead. The mountain mass is that of the Glyders, and the great cliffs below the right-hand summit show some of the greatest rock-climbs in Wales. The rocks in the foreground show signs of tremendous glaciation, and moraine remains are visible beyond.

Holiday Coast

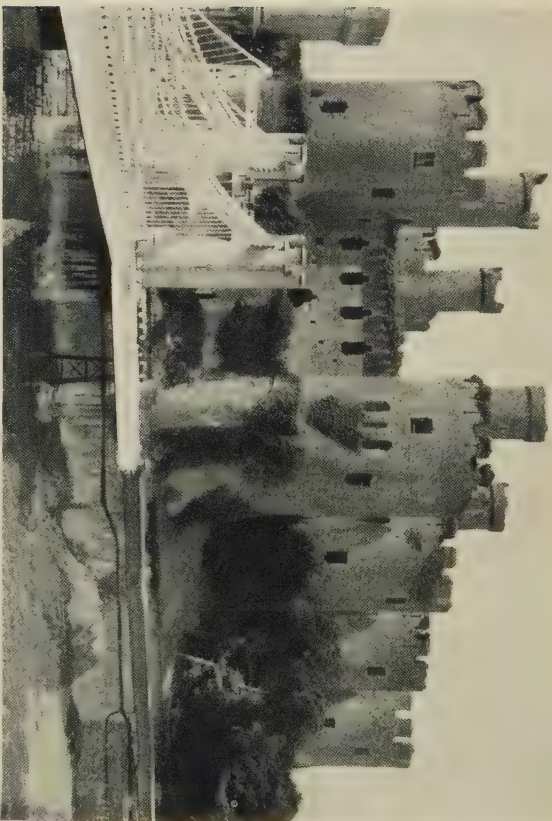
the marsh and golf links on the left, and wonderful views all around. One easily loses sight and knowledge of Llandudno though it is not far away. There is an old castle, but it needs an enthusiast to trace the remains. The two little pepper-box hills above the houses give charming views up the Conway trough as well as back to the sea, and across to dark Conway Castle and town, etched against the green woods and pastures.

CHAPTER III

CONWAY CASTLE AND RIVER

WHERE in Britain can one find the equal of Conway's great castle and walled town? Shrewsbury, Tenby, Chester, have retained their walls, but the castles are either down or not impressive. Carnarvon excels in the size of its fortress, but the town is less distinctive. Even great York, while pointing to its incomparable Minster, must admit that Conway, standing on rock above the swinging tides, with a background of mighty ridges, has a far choicer site. From every approach, except the Holyhead railway tunnel, the place stands out distinctive, fortress, palace, and garrison town in one. There is often a schooner or two in the anchorage, a coaster at the quay, and at times one may chaffer with Welsh fishermen for salmon or deep-sea fish their nets have captured in the estuary. Conway's town walls are shaped like a Welsh harp, the three fronts being about three-quarters of a mile each. There are twenty-seven round towers and a fosse to strengthen the outer defences, and the upper gate was also guarded by a drawbridge and protective works.

The castle stands on a steep rock, two sides



Photo

CONWAY CASTLE

Where in 1294, during a fearful season of storm, the Welsh almost starved Edward I into surrender.
Though a ruin, Conway Castle is the most striking fortress in Wales.

Underwood Press Service

Conway Castle & River

being washed by an arm of the river, the remaining two facing the town across a moat. One small entrance goes down narrow, winding rock-steps to the river. The eight great drum towers, connected by high walls and each surmounted by a slender watch tower, make one think of Crusader days—there is something Eastern in their aspect. The gateway is a complicated place, every yard having its problem of portcullis or defended castle for besiegers. The great hall is 130 feet long and 32 feet wide, with fine Gothic arches to support its roof.

The royal builder found the strong walls a refuge once when the rebellious Welsh swooped down from the mountains, broke through his army on the march, and carried off his stores of food. The flooded river cut off supplies from the east, and the monarch fared rather badly on the rough food shared with his army. Owen Glyndwr, firebrand of North Wales, stormed the castle once, but he could not hold it against the English. The wreck is a condition left after the Restoration, when the Earl of Conway plundered it of lead, timber, iron, and other valuables in order to build himself a house in Ireland.

Telford's chain bridge was opened in 1826: the height above high-water mark 18 feet, breadth length between supporting towers is 326 feet, 32 feet, and height of supporting pillars 42 feet. The railway bridge has a span of 400 feet, and was opened to traffic in 1848.

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Most of us enter Conway over Telford's road bridge, and regret that the great railway tubes interfere with a clear view of the castle. As this narrow rocky gut is the only place where a bridge can be thrown across the river without enormous expense, we accept the inevitable. There is still a toll on all vehicles for the upkeep of the bridge, which is kept so smart in silver grey that the trifle of tribute is cheerfully bestowed. Imagine the chains, wires and bars in deep mourning; would the colour bring out the dark purple-red tones of King Edward's great towers and walls beyond? That monarch must have had energy indeed; if he did not entirely subjugate the Welsh nation, he fettered its predatory princes with a dozen strong castles and made certain the failure, after the first flush of success, of any local revolt. His architects, masons, and labourers had some weary years, and however the Exchequer paid even the necessary bills is a mystery, for between times Edward was having an expensive try for the crown of France, or acting as "Hammer of the Scots" for some unworthy protégé to the northern throne.

Pictures rather than words can show Conway Castle as a magnificent ruin: what its glories must have been when thronged with a King's military court is beyond one's power to envision. Those great shells and halls, open to the sky, present such a tragic appeal that one does not wonder that benevolent Americans sometimes

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desire to build up the breaches, glaze and shutter the gaping windows, lead over the great spans of roof, and blazon afresh the glories of the inner walls. It is due to the innate heroism of Wales that such offers are declined in advance; despite anything, crushing war debt, bad trade, unemployment, the nation sees that its ancient monuments are preserved, if not renovated and rebuilt with modern materials.

The great ruined spaces of Conway Castle are really impressive: every one looks at the great banqueting hall, the towers of King and Queen, and accepts the theory that the little recess in a deep wall is the relic of a fine, if minute, Gothic chapel. And we come out into Conway's bustling streets just a little relieved that such lofty stairs, aerial passages, and thick walls have not fallen to our lot. Our prisons are less dark than the great Royal rooms must have been. If the quay at Conway is preferred, it is because one can be crushed by such historic magnificence. Who could eat bread and cheese in those thick-walled apartments? But one goes again and again to the castle, impelled by some force which is not convention, and which cannot be put into words. A walk round the old town walls is pleasant on a breezy day: one has glimpses of sea and river, of a tangle of dear old streets and houses, and a more genial, protective aspect of Edward's old castle with its ruthless history.

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Plas Mawr is one's favourite indoor resort at Conway—a family mansion, built in the days of good Queen Bess, and retaining in its rooms some of the original carvings. The Royal Cambrian Academy uses Plas Mawr as its headquarters, and furniture, carving, and ironwork of ancient Welsh design and undoubted antiquity can be studied side by side with the output of modern Welsh artists. After seeing this ancient plas, one should instantly get lost in the town, a proceeding which is not difficult among alleys and backyards where are odd relics of ancient building and timber, and sometimes aromas like a perpetual washing-day as well. Every downhill turn at Conway leads to the quay, where there are always picturesque folk to pose for the camera or for the artist's sketch-book. The smallest house in Wales seems big enough to take the longest Welsh place-name sideways; it is a popular catch-penny.

There is only one other duty—the view of Conway Castle from the south, and this is worth while. The Trefriw road dives round a few corners and over a trifling bridge, then there is for half a mile a splendid view of the grim fortress across the narrow stream. One can forget that railway and road bridges exist, and wait for the old ferry which a century ago still brought horses, carriages, and passengers across the pulsing Conway tide.

Across the river, beyond Llandudno Junction,



Photo

Underwood Press Service

PLAS MAWR, CONWAY

The Elizabethan mansion of the Wynnes of Gwydir, now the home of the Royal Cambrian Academy, retains many original features, plaster ceilings, fireplaces, furniture, etc., of its period.

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there is another fine view, of which Thomas Pennant (who travelled by carriage or on horseback) wrote: "From the road, in many parts, are most august views of the vast expanse of the river, and the majestic towers of Conway. Similar views, and old fortified towns, I have seen frequent on the Rhine, but in magnificence far inferior to these, our British glory."

A word of warning, however—do not walk up to Llanrwst. Whatever conveyance is right, the boot is wrong. For a dozen miles the ditch of Conway meanders through flat, muddy meadows, or is held up by the tide to a mere canal slackness, and the hills are too near to enable one to see the distant peaks of Snowdonia. A melancholy interest attaches to Dolgarrog, where, in the autumn of 1924, the bursting of a dam on the upper moor swept away bridges, a church and a hamlet, with the loss of some sixteen lives, and was the ruin of hundreds of acres, meadows being buried in boulders and silt. Trefriw's chalybeate and sulphur springs still have their attraction, but the walk past the cascades to Llyn Crafnant or Llyn Geirionydd is more interesting to healthy folks.

Llanrwst is an excellent starting point for a little trip; at this point, the Conway has just ceased to be tidal, and there are bright pools with pebbly margins. The vale is much narrower, and waterfalls and pleasant tree-lined gorges come down from the hills on both sides. At

Conway Castle & River

Llanrwst church the Gwydir chapel is worth seeing, but the bridge over the river is more interesting to the outdoor person. "If a person place his back against the stone on the middle arch, and another strikes back against the opposite stone, the whole bridge is felt to vibrate."

The way to Bettws-y-Coed is delightful, for the map shows a score of routes by which one can escape from river and main road into the woods, climb to the edge of the moor for a fresh breeze and clear outlook, and then drop back to the glyn or glen, a few miles nearer the famous village. Above Gwydir Castle, an old bowling green and a stone bench, half-way up the breast of the hill, mark a particularly delightful spot. The cave of David ap Jenkins, a bold outlaw of the past, is concealed in a drift of loose stone.

The gorges and slopes above the Conway are little the worse for mining and quarrying operations long ago. Nature has almost erased the old workings, but has left the pony and other paths smooth, green and convenient for present-day rambles: the few buildings still in use can be ignored. In North Wales, one can study the aftermath of industrial failure: the slate debris is practically indestructible by weather, and yet parsley fern soon begins to peer through the gaps; lead relics are soon skimmed over with thin grass; copper ore nodules are obstinate, while iron decomposes fairly rapidly. The coal tips are



Photo

SWALLOW FALLS, NEAR BETTWS-Y-COED

Practically visible from Telford's great road across Wales, these falls are one of the best known of show-places in Britain.

G. W. E.

Conway Castle & River

perhaps the worst, for the rain drips poison and mud out of them and devastates the rills below of their flowers and fishes for a century to come.

Some of the chief attractions of Bettws are Conway Falls, Miner's Bridge, and Swallow Falls in particular. These are quite close to Telford's road, which passes through the village on its way to Menai. Bettws is really a centre from which no walker can go wrong, and no motorist can go right. The roads are not the strong points of Bettws-y-Coed. The car grinds up a long hill, runs over a moor, dips maybe to a bridge, and then returns, perhaps, by a similar route—unless it makes a big dive for Snowdonia or the sea coast. The lakes at Capel Curig and Llyn Ogwen in Nant Francon have their beauties, but they are not to be compared, either in situation or in size, with the English Lakes. The motorist can spin rove the great Pentre Voelas moors to Cerrig-y-Drudion and Corwen; he can go out to Ffestiniog by Dolwyddelan, and having done so he must admit that the Rambler who has taken the track for Cowlyd or Crafnant or other llyn above the vale has had a finer day. The great woods which clothe the Conway slopes are also easily accessible on foot, and every water-course has its own particular beauty.

The guide-book sends one in search of ruined chapels, lost sites, and unknown rock fragments which may be inscribed or not. Only the en-

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thusiast in Welsh history can recall the formidable names of heroes ; fortunately the heroines are less polysyllabic, but their woes and trials are rather confusing.

There is something glorious and alluring in the springy moss, the resilience of the deep and homely heather, in the songs of birds and of bees, in the cloud scapes which city folks should treasure just as much as the splendid colours of the hills and the vales reaching out to the horizon. It was a great admirer of North Wales who left that thought with me, and one never returns to the grand sky-bowl of the upper moors without discerning more and more of its colour, of its permanency of spirit and appeal despite all seeming vagueness and evanescence. If you look level, you see men at work in the fields, but lift up your chin to see a veritable fairyland. The contours of the hills change not ; the range of tone and colour in any one hour is limited, but who can tell whether the glory of a Welsh sky is going to be in grey or silver, in gold or dark purple, in the softest, the richest and the deepest and most menacing of Nature's blue, even unto a solid black.

The road to Dolwyddelan is pretty enough, but the Lledr path is a far finer approach. This high rocky country, dominated by Moel Siabod, was the home of an old Welsh Meredydd who did not object to bandits as neighbours in his old age ; relatives were a worse trouble. " I had rather

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fight with outlaws and thieves than with my own blood and kindred. If I continue in my own house at Eifionydd I must either kill my relations or be killed by them." It must have been a regret to the rugged old sportsman that the supply of bandits failed, and that he was soon at peace in the rocky fastness by the Lledr. Meredydd had finished them off by the time his two square towers and courtyard between were complete for residence. This warrior had a descendant whose broken nose offended the handsome Welsh princes; they would not elect the deformity as king, so he trained his son to become Llewelyn the Great, and so turned a scourge on his detractors, who had to accept the second warrior whether they would or not. Dolwyddelan was the last stronghold in Wales to resist Edward I, and that is something to its credit.

The upper vales which feed the Conway at Bettws provide glorious, if longer, rambles. One can wander or scramble by the wooded watersides and along deep flowery meadows, or climb up to the dark moors and isolated sheep farms and cottages. The Machno splits into a number of gorges, and Conway itself ends at a llyn "most dismally situated among rock and bog." Yspytty Ifan is quite the limit of civilization, seven miles from Bettws, and the return route can be varied by slanting across the moors to Penmachno and even to Dolwyddelan. These higher walks are breezy, wild and stern. The

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better walks for the ordinary sightseer are lower, and end somewhere about timber line. Do not climb too high.

In these motor-using days, Pentre Voelas has become a mere cross-road on the great grouse moors between Dee, Conway and Clwyd districts. Wild tracks branch off the Telford road to Llanrwst, Denbigh, Ruthin, as well as further into the western wilds of Carnarvonshire. The Voelas Arms was a famous inn in the old coaching-days, a first stage for horses out from Cerrig-y-Drudion.

Photo

SUMMIT OF SNOWDON, FROM LYN GLASLYN

Print



The great crag, all rifted with gullies, purple with scree, streaked in winter with snow, and with jetting cataracls after summer rain, is worth a visit though one may not aspire to greater heights.

CHAPTER IV

SNOWDONIA'S ASCENTS

THE great cluster of peaks known as Snowdonia gives scope for much ridge walking, most of it fairly easy, but with occasionally stiff ascents and awkward paths between deep declivities. Eryri or Snowdonia was the last stronghold of the Welsh princes, but one who expects to find ancient camps and towers of this regime among the peaks will be disappointed. Llewelyn and other warriors preferred the Hills of Clwyd as a fortified barrier against invasion; when that line was permanently forced, the independence of North Wales was doomed. This great cluster of peaks is wild and lonely country, and one may walk all day without meeting even a shepherd. The gamekeeper is little in vogue either, for only grouse are preserved, and they dwell on the lower heather and do not frequent the bare high peaks.

From Aber on the north coast to Aberglaslyn in the south (or to take a more direct line from Llanfairfechan to Beddgelert) makes a long and distinctive mountain tour, covering all the finest tops in Wales. One must admit that Dr. Arthur Wakefield, with Messrs. Eustace Thomas and J.

Snowdonia's Ascents

Rooke Corbett, conquered all the fourteen Welsh peaks over 3000 feet in height in twenty-two and a half hours on August 9th to 10th, 1919, but less active folks may take four good days for the task. If every ridge is to be explored, however, a week must be allowed.

From Aber on the coast, the Avon Goch is followed to the famous waterfall with its drop of 200 feet. The "narrows" here are passed on a high and rather sensational path across the cliff, after which there is a good slope due east up to Y Foel Fras, 3091 feet. (This point can be reached from Llanfairfechan by aiming for the bwllch or pass on the old Roman road to the Conway, and then turning south over Drum and other gradually rising ground.) From Y Foel Fras to the nearest Carnedd (Llewelyn, 3484 feet), one wanders over grass with broad tracks, easy ascents and few stones. In dull weather this is wild, gruesome country, but the marshes with their rich coloured moss patches are easily avoided. One almost recommends a day of rolling mist, when sea, low country, and mountain crest alternately are clouded and clear. At such a time the shoulder and crest, really mild almost to tameness, soar and overhang in the grey curtain—a sweep of air, and they are stark clear, and one is looking down to the black shield of Llyn Dulin or the eye catches the flash of moving water far away on the moors. In rain or heavy wind the crossing of this country becomes hard work, and

Snowdonia's Ascents

at any time the Rambler must take map and compass, fixing the points carefully if there is the slightest sign of mist and cloud. Yet with an average amount of care, this northern moor above Carnedd Llewelyn is safe; the worst line of escape is toward the Aber waterfall, but there is a visible track long before the "narrows" are reached. Some of the ridge views are fine, particularly those over the coast and the sea. The Vale of Conway is practically hidden. At best, one sees the streams from mountain llyns breaking over a rocky edge or disappearing in heather-hung gorges.

From uninspiring Carnedd Llewelyn descent must be made to a grassy bridge, at about 2600 feet, which leads to Carnedd Dafydd. Our first acquaintance with this was rather unexpected. It was a cloudy day, and we were stepping down a steep incline with a grass track, passing into gloom, when the mist suddenly parted. To left and right the mountain fell away into tremendous gulfs, and there was just a narrow bridge of grey stone and grass in front. This ended against a sheer cloud-capped cliff, and looked a bit awkward. Of course it was a delusion, but the day had been long and lonely, and had it not been that Ogwen lay direct over the Dafydd ridge, there might have been shirking. Since then, one has crossed the ridge with snow underfoot and a gale blowing, but the sensation was mild compared with the great black gulfs of that first impression.

Snowdonia's Ascents

Llewelyn, it must be admitted, is much less a peak than Dafydd, 3426 feet. The summit is a good walk to the right, but the trip up the rising plane is worth while. One can make a direct descent from the cairn to Llyn Ogwen and so save the rather long but easy walk down the grass slope, and to the Capel Curig road at the east end of the llyn.

The ridge south of Ogwen and Nant Ffrancon is much livelier, for there are few and steep grass slopes on the north edge of the Glyder ridge. One can begin with Tryfan (3010 feet), a lovely saw-tooth overlooking the llyn of Ogwen, and pass to Glyder Fawr and Fach, two peaks of 3279 and 3262 feet, in one mighty mass, then over stony Y Garn, 3104 feet, to Elidwr Fawr, 3029 feet, whence there is easy descent among quarries to Llanberis village and lakes. Tryfan is a handful, and the two great blocks which form the top are quite sensationally poised on a narrow platform above some sheer climbers' cliffs. A conscientious line along the ridge to the Glyders is a fierce task for the mere Rambler. As one steps down the great rock towers of Tryfan there are alarming drops to the left into deep rock gorges. At the bwlch or pass beneath Glyder mountain the outlook is severe, but really the shoulder (named the Castle of Winds) is nothing worse than a hard scramble up scree and broken rock. There is, however, no need to get into sensational places on Tryfan ridge, for a few

A great motor road passes down this glorious vale, but the views of the cwms and ridges up to the

Photo

VALE OF GWYNANT

L.M.S.



Snowdonia's Ascents

yards away to the right there is an easier track, and then by turning east by the Miner's Track for Penygwryd for half a mile, one can reach the upper field of Glyder without any trouble. Because of the views of the great north cliffs and towers of Tryfan one almost recommends this detour.

The top of the Glyder is partly grass, but round the rocks, crowned by the Ordnance Survey cairns, there is a mighty tangle of stone blocks, to any but mountain folk "the worst going in Britain." One must step warily, for the edges are sharp and gaps are plentiful. One has spent a night on one or other Welsh peak, but the Glyders have been avoided because the promenade and approach is really bad in darkness. However, this does not detract from their daylight value as a view-point. The great masses of the Carnedds, Tryfan, Siabod and Y Wyddfa, with Lliwedd, are most conspicuous, with deep cwms, lovely little llynns or tarns, waterfalls and sharp buttresses rising into the sky. In this estimate of the mountain, there is no mention of the fine rock-climbing courses. If one wishes to study these, the high peak is not the place, though—by the way—there is a little gymnastic feat on the last steep of Glyder, as you rise from the bwleh and Miner's Path. A big overhanging quoit or cannon stone can be reached, and from the outer edge of this your feet may dangle into space. This is glorious, but neither rock-climbing nor yet ridge-scrambling.

Snowdonia's Ascents

The greatest rock-climbs in the Glyder ridge are above Llyn Idwal, a dark water about twenty minutes' stroll from Ogwen. On the way up, the eye is always attracted by that wonderful cleft, Twll Du, or the Devil's Kitchen, where a thread of water comes down a narrow rift in the rock, and makes a picture reminding one, rather, in its romance, of Dungeon Ghyll in the Lake District. For the benefit of the lazy, it may be conceded that much of the charm of the Devil's Kitchen is visible from a distance. It is possible to scramble up to the foot of the actual wall, over water-smoothed rocks, but with that the visitor should be content. The great walls of the gorge are really wonderful. The complete conquest needs exceptional skill, a party of good rock-climbers, and years have gone past during which it has never been climbed at all.

The route from the Glyders to Y Garn passes the top of the Devil's Kitchen, and there is an absolutely eerie glimpse down the great crevasse to Idwal, apparently sheer beneath, and to Ogwen, over the foothills beyond. From the same point there is a corridor down, next to the Glyder wall, and in the opposite direction a track is easily made to Llanberis.

After Tryfan and the Glyders, Y Garn and Elidwr Fawr, though rising over 3000 feet, are far less interesting, and there is little reason, except for a good view from Y Garn down the Ogwen vale to the sea, to continue the ramble.



Photo

SNOWDON, A DISTANT VIEW

I. H. Chesterdon

This photograph from the lower lake at Llanberis shows the great mountain rising peak beyond peak to the small cone (which is the real summit) on the right. The Pass of Llanberis is to the left of centre over the lake and flat tongue of meadow.

Snowdonia's Ascents

In any case the route has been obvious for miles. Still, there is something in one's casual remark : " I have been up all the fourteen points in Wales which are over the 3000 feet contour." These outlying peaks must be garnered in at the first opportunity.

Our next mountain section is the famous Snowdon group, south of the pass of Llanberis. One rarely climbs the Glyders and Tryfan except from Ogwen ; the hotels at Penygwryd and Penypass are admirable for Snowdon. Perhaps one forgets the party-haunted Llanberis because of its tumult and its rack railway to Snowdon summit. Beddgelert and Rhyd-ddu are splendid centres for the south side of the group, for there is not a really dull side to Snowdon. Towards Carnarvon, there may be long stretches of sheep-walk and moors, but there is neither village nor track in that direction.

Snowdon has three peaks over 3000 feet. Y Wyddfa, which is the central cone, is 3560 feet ; Carnedd Ugain, 3493 feet, is the next highest point in Wales. To many who love hill rambling, the steep and narrow Crib Goch, 3023 feet, is quite unattainable. It is rough and hard work. Indeed, the crossing of its summit and ridge to Snowdon is only equalled in the British Isles by the great ridge walks in the Coolin of Skye. Of course, one cannot agree with an ancient " thriller " who claimed that Crib Goch was like a tight-rope, a mile in length, and with great

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declivities beneath, whitened with the bones of those who had failed to cross in safety !

Crib Goch arête, taken by the easiest possible route, is quite different to anything else in Wales. In high wind, rain and snow it may be positively dangerous. The breezy crazy pinnacle is merely one of several rock towers for the conquest of which the safety of a rope is needed. It is easy to trip, to fall, or to mistake the route. The little easy chimney which invites one from above may be a mere hack in the rock which falls steeply into the cwms below. Over Crib Goch and Crib-y-Ddysgl, the practical walker has an exhilarating time. He is cautious enough to look for that path a couple of yards down the slabs towards Llyn Llydaw, and uses the actual edge as a handrail. At each tower he climbs down a few yards and finds a line of cairns or piled stones which leads past the base and rises again beyond.

Every delight ends, even on Snowdon mountain. Sometimes one has felt, in high summer, that the shoulder of Carnedd Ugain is really near enough, for the final cone of Y Wyddfa is often crawling with train-loads of visitors. Coal smoke belches and eddies around the top platform of the railway—but let us forget. There was one early Easter, when ice and snow crowned the peak and hid every vestige of hut and tram-line, and the axe had to clink out our footsteps here and there. That was a gloriously clear day, but Wales at

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Easter has hardly the strong contrasts one sees from Ben Nevis or elsewhere in Scotland. Anglesey is a fair isle, but it is not the Hebrides with the dark shadow of heather and the fires of bracken, nor is the narrow river-like Menai Straits like lordly Loch Linnhe or the Sound of Mull with its deep purple tides and white fangs of reef and isle.

There are a score paths and variations up Snowdon, four "horse tracks" at least, and one railway. The less said about that the better for one's temper. It fumes and roars, spits and smells, and is a true abomination because it breeds the other abominations of untidiness of the cone round the station. Waste paper, pedlars, automatic machines, are vile. The "hotel" is an eyesore; what there is within, one does not know. It would take a great hunger to drive one within its doors, and as for the hawkers of postcards, Goss china, and chocolates—they are ubiquitous and iniquitous as the beggars of Italy or the guides of Port Said. But Wales deserves to suffer. Since the War there has been an opportunity to purchase, either by negotiation or in the open market, a great tract of Snowdonia, including one face of the summit. This might have become a national park, yet Wales let the matter slide. What was everybody's business became the business of nobody!

The rambler who reaches Snowdon over Crib Goch is likely to complete the "Horseshoe"

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over triple-crowned Lliwedd, where the ridge becomes so narrow that one glances down rock gullies and buttresses from the safe and easy summit track. Tread softly in such a place, a loosened stone may slide out of view, trickle over a little corner, and whistle like a rifle bullet a hundred feet below. It strikes the wall, and gully and traverse are swept by splinters. At such a time climbing parties are in great danger. One is never sure that accidents to solitary climbers and rambles may not be laid to the account of stones so shaken down by sheep and human beings. Moreover, one loose piece may bring down a great avalanche of shattered blocks, and then there is a peril indeed.

From the high cone of Snowdon, the route to Llanberis is a sloping street, rather badly worn, and with no greater delight than mist and wind. Toward Llyn Quellyn, the old "Snowdon Ranger" path, green and easy, wanders across to ridge of Llechog, where sometimes the wind is very uncomfortable. The descent towards Beddgelert is easily seen from above. There are three paths to the south, and one cannot easily recommend the best. Sir Watkins's pony path swings down to the Bwlch-y-Saethau (pass of the arrows) below Lliwedd, and affords on the way some fine views across splendid cliffs and into deep cwms—but it ends in a civilized macadam motor road in Nant Gwynant, that loveliest of North Wales valleys, some miles from Beddgelert. There is a

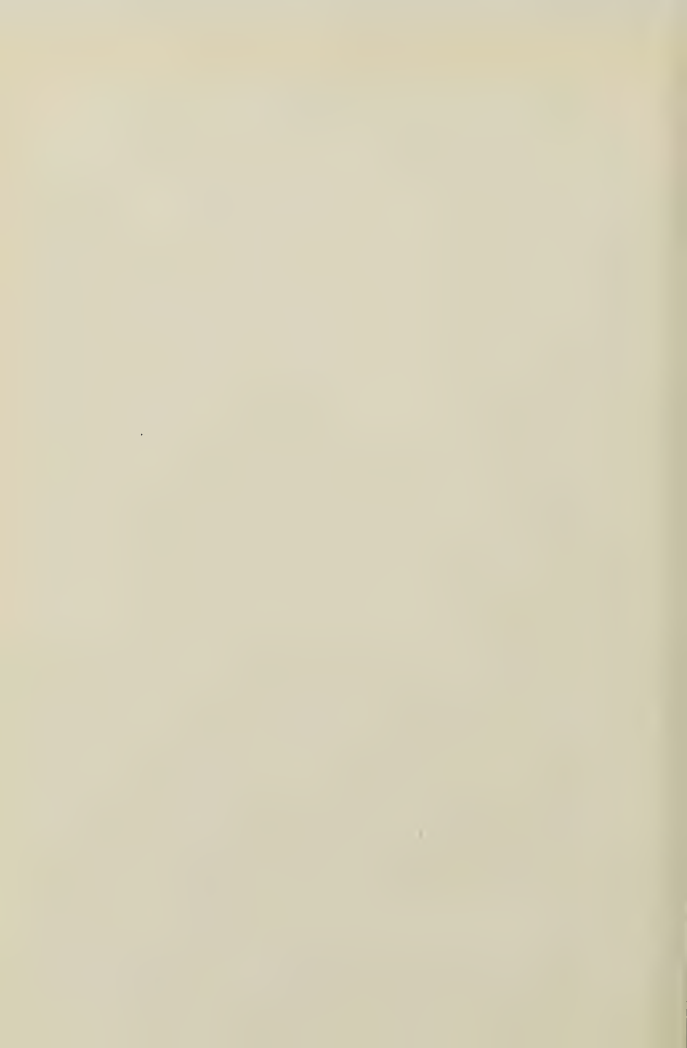


Photo

L.M.S.

PONT-Y-CROMLECH, IN THE PASS OF LLANBERIS.

Despite electric cables, the defile still retains a striking beauty of its own. The Gromlech is merely a recess among mighty boulders which have fallen from the cliffs high above. This is the most popular, and probably the most glorious, road-pass in Snowdonia,



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“ sky-line ” route over Aran, a southern buttress of Snowdon, which keeps a steady direction, and if there is such a desire, one can descend a final rock slab into the back garden of a famous climbing quarters in Beddgelert ! The easiest path probably is that down the Llechog ridge, which may end at Pitt's Head farm, between Rhyd-ddu and Beddgelert, and pass down a mile or two of motor road.

The last great ridge of our Snowdonia stands across the Gwynant rift. In Moel Siabod, as approached from Capel Curig, it has a rather remarkable ascent, which has been compared, perhaps wrongly, to Great Gable, in Cumberland, and Schiehallion, in Perthshire, for beauty. Neither of these masses, however, flattens out into the tame walk which one sees going southwest from Siabod, crossed by a dreadful trellis of electric wires. The Siabod range gives a fine view of Snowdonia in the early morning, and again after sunset, when the great western group stands out in silhouette. One would be sorry to omit Moel Siabod from any walking holiday in Wales ; it is a fine trip, going out from Capel Curig and taking the first possible descent to Dolwyddelan, or vice versa. However, walk along the wall to Nant Gwynant and Beddgelert when the day is too close and crowded. One has a view of the ghastly motor procession up the Gwryd glen and over the pass of Llanberis, which makes one thankful for the tedious and breezy

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miles along the ridge with just now and again a deep nook on the Lledr side to break the monotony. The Cynicht peak, which can be reached along the ridge, is a long, long distance away, and is better reached from Beddgelert direct.



Photo

L.M.S.

MOEL SIABOD, FROM THE STEPPING-STONES, CAPEL CURIG

From this angle, the graceful peak has been compared, not unfavourably sometimes, with Great Gable in Cumberland, and Schichallion in Perthshire. Certainly it is a lovely mountain set in glorious surroundings.



CHAPTER V

SNOWDONIA'S PATHS AND PASSES

THERE are many paths in Snowdonia which do not turn one's eyes to the hill-tops, but aim across the passes and moors. From Aber there is the old Roman way, now green and at places scarcely visible, which leads past a famous stone on the Bwlch-y-Ddeufan to a camp in the Conway vale. There are paths up the gorges from that river to the high llyns, and these march further, sometimes, as above Dulyn and Eigiau, to be lost on the sheep-walks and bogs, or like those by Cowlyd and Crafnant, to trace a pleasant way to Capel Curig. A wonderful number of paths seem to finish there.

There is another path, that of the Miners, which passes from Penygwryd to Ogwen, across the coves of the Glyders. This is part of an almost traditional trail by which quarry workers from Bethesda made and make their trips to other jobs at far-off Ffestiniog. A similar track west of Snowdon connects Llanberis, and thence goes over the hills to Bethesda, or Glanogwen. The four sets of quarries are rarely prosperous at the same time, so that in the past there has been considerable drift of workers looking for fresh

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“bargains” or contracts here and there. One has heard stories of parties straggling across these long miles early on Saturday evening, and returning on Sunday with heavy baskets of food which had to last the workers for the week. These paths are fairly broad, still well marked, and have served as pony and cattle tracks as well.

A wanderer on Tryfan once heard a quiet murmur welling up—a hundred sheep were crossing the cwm, and were heading over the ridge to Llyn Bockllwyd and down the track to Ogwen. “Whyever not!” exclaimed Mrs. Jones, when the incident was mentioned. It has been said that Welsh drovers can handle cattle, ponies and sheep anywhere and everywhere. The modern drover certainly prefers very devious tracks rather than push a terrified mob along a busy motor road. On the open hills his dog and he can watch and thwart any attempt at rebellion before the herd bursts into a panic.

There are little-known paths into the recesses of the Glyders, but each ends below the great columns and walls of rock. They make a lovely jaunt for an idle afternoon in summer, when we are indifferent as to route; and the imaginative can settle on a favourite cwm as a secret empire; it may be a year before even a shepherd enters the place.

The path from Rhyd-ddu to Llanberis rises high, but it is definitely marked, and until recent

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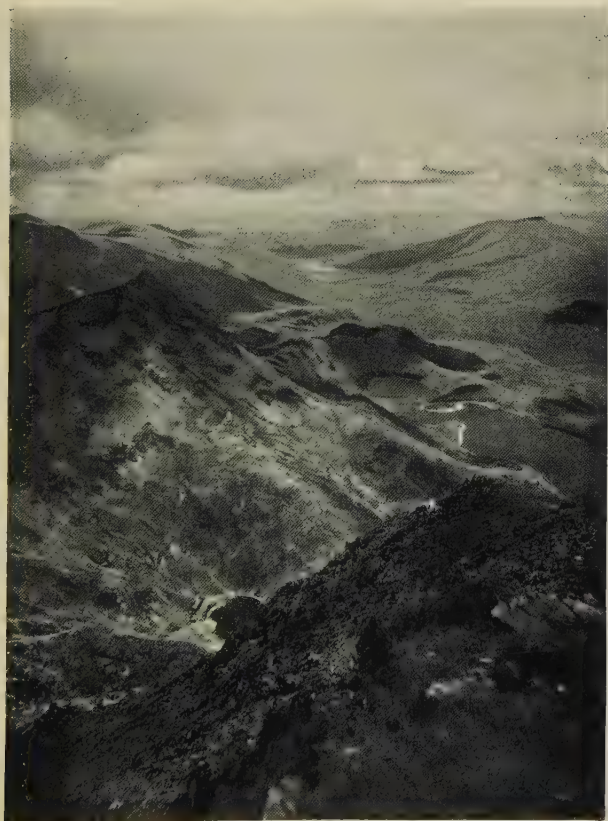
motor years it was a favourite pony route for ladies and luggage. In dealing with the peaks of Snowdonia, most of the mountain paths have been mentioned, but there are two on Snowdon which need special description. I have traversed from Beddgelert to Llanberis without crossing Snowdon at all. Instead of scrambling up the soft loose sods and earth of the south face to the station and hotel at the summit, a turn was made to the right from the " Ranger " path, and a line taken for the lowest gap between Lliwedd and Y Wyddfa, the central peak. This is the famous Bwlch-y-Saethau, 2691 feet above the sea, from which a steep scree path descends beneath the great north rocks of Snowdon. Keep near the foot of the cliff, and you will be taken steeply, yet safely, down, down, to the Glaslyn, passing between mountain and lake. Beyond this is the Capel Curig track. As you approach the lynn, there is in front the sharp edge of Crib Goch and the great tower of Crib-y-Ddysgl. The lowest pass between them, the Bwlch Goch, leads over to Cwm Dyli and finally the road to Llanberis. There is just a sufficiency of cairns and nail-scratches to mark the route in dull weather. One has passed it, using map and compass, in rolling mist, but on a day of rain, snow or choking cloud, it cannot be recommended to the stranger. On both ridges there are places where a wrong turn would give the wanderer considerable trouble. Under fair and normal conditions, however, it is

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a fine bit of walking, in superlative rock scenery and wild mountain company. The descent on the Llanberis side of Crib Goch is very steep, but it is not really difficult to a party of walkers. As an "alone-goer," my warning to solitary rambles in the less-known coves of Snowdon may sound a little curious—but who should know better the dangers than one who has, perhaps, more or less, risked his way through them?

The paths about Moel Siabod do not count for much, perhaps because the best is now spoilt by an electric aerial trapeze. It is odd to come up against such things out of mist and rain. They spoil the peace of the upper mountain.

The roads across Snowdonia are remarkable for their beauty, and for the hundreds of cars which race along them. We have already surveyed the road from Conway to the hills, and written a little about the great Telford route which comes from Corwen through Cerrig-y-Drudion to Bettws-y-Coed. Out of this village the road rises steadily, here along the edge of a gorge such as at Miners' Bridge, or at the Swallow Falls. Years ago this view could be glorious in winter, when it returned to primitive wildness, but nowadays man has printed his horrible sign-manual of wire fences, timber steps, and even a turnstile. It is hateful to find a beauty spot so trammelled and spoilt. The falls are really fine, and there is a good view from the opposite side of the gorge which should not be missed, though



Photo

Realistic Travels

OUTLOOK FROM SNOWDON

The small llyn is that of Glaslyn, nearly 1600 feet below the summit ; beyond is Llyn Llydaw, 2100 feet below. In the distance is Moel Siabod

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it entail half a mile of wandering in glorious woods. Now the Lledr stream turns off and we are by the Gwryd, a stream of Snowdonia, though not of Snowdon itself.

At Capel Curig the road splits ; to the right is the old road towards Menai, passing shortly over the ridge and descending quietly into Nant Francon. The dozen miles from Bettws through Capel is comparable to any in Wales, though one admits that the descent of Nant Gwynant may reveal more glorious contrasts of lake, wood and mountain. Its great glimpse upward to Snowdon, however, has nothing of the intimacy which Tryfan gives to the older road, and Ogwen claims to be the finest roadside llyn in the country. In any case we are in quietest Wales (except for motor traffic), with fine views of rock, mere and cwm.

After Capel Curig, with its three or more hotels, there is no village nor yet inn for some miles until Ogwen cottage, at the foot of its lake, is reached, which has developed into quite a large place. The angler finds welcome and sport at Ogwen, for there are swirling pools in the streams, quiet reaches in the vale, and two or three upland tarns to choose from when fish are slow to move in the greater water. The lower part of Nant Francon needs little description ; it is quiet ; there are views of mountain through swirling mist and melting haze, and gloom and glory of deep valleys. The road, however, soon becomes a pageant of

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the slate industry, and that's not a trade we have come out to see. History has left few obvious relics here, yet we are deep within the great ring of fortresses which subdued the heart of Wales.

In its way, Capel Curig is as famous as Bettws-y-Coed ; the air is more bracing, for the Conway trench has been left and many breezes bring down the caller breath of Snowdonia, or the sweet gale, thyme and heather scents from the north-eastern moors. Capel Curig is a small hamlet at the road-ends, with less accommodation than Bettws, but with a score more avenues of escape from the "madding crowd," which has become somewhat thinner by the miles, and the fact that the village holds little to encourage a large motoring party to halt. There is, however, a wee and quaint old church, and the walk down to the twin lakes is worth taking.

From Capel Curig the branch road from the Telford route was once a horse-path toward Snowdon, but now there is a great modern road through the pass of Llanberis to distant Carnarvon. About four miles out of Capel the route splits and the left hand branch goes down to Nant Gwynant, Beddgelert, the pass of Aberglaslyn, and to Cardigan Bay at Portmadoc.

The first few miles from Capel Curig pass along a terrace above the rattling river, with the twin lakes just across the pasture. If one can travel outside the tourist season this is a pretty bit of

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footwork, though to a tired man the great smooth wall of Moel Siabod seems tame. In summer, the miles from Gwryd to Penygwryd are terrible ; but one may find an alternative route by striking up any moorland track just above the village, and then drifting on and on until the Miners' Path is reached, and a slant made for the hotel at the foot of the pass. One has even climbed Siabod in order to escape the traffic, but that is a desperate remedy. There was a mistake, too, which added variety to the route. Instead of continuing along the Siabod ridge toward the electric trapeze which carries the power from Nant Gwynant to Ffestiniog, and following "the height of land," the turn was made too soon, and a particularly boggy stretch was discovered. In North Wales, if great patches of white cotton grass are seen, the area is watery and should be avoided ! Prior to the War there was much timber in the Gwryd basin, and perhaps in some future age there will be green glory again. A forest would be easy to tolerate, for the road lifts steadily up, and there would be none of the dinginess of level, artificial, close-packed plantations.

As stated before, Capel Curig has excellent inns, and the Royal is famous for its good Welsh food and service. Penygwryd is now a great place of an inn, and to the rock-climber, historic. From the lowly portals of its predecessor issued the parties who, with ropes, forced the hundred routes and variations up Lliwedd. These men

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came at Easter and Christmas, when they found great ice-gullies and steep snow in upper Cwm Dyli, in addition to great rock routes, and the renown of the sport soon travelled across the world. One must not expect to find climbers here, or at Pen-y-pass further on, in summer. Even if the climbers were in residence, the average visitor might not be really aware of their existence. They go early to the hills, and are usually chased home by gathering dusk. In evening attire, the climber of to-day is undistinguished from the anglers, idlers, and ramblers in the dinner crowd—until a little party begins to talk in the jargon of their sport !

From this side the pass of Llanberis is easy and gives fine views. At the summit, the easiest pass to Snowdon branches off to the left, and one has seen motor-cars struggling upon the first half-mile of its rough and rutted surface. Usually the adventure stops pretty early, though one has seen a family car driven up to Llyn Llydaw and across the causeway there. On this track, the further you go, the worse you fare ; retreat is frequently difficult, but retreat you must.

Llanberis, with its ruined Dolbadarn castle on the lake, is another great centre of Snowdonia, though, maybe, the motor-car has taken away the unique flavour of the village being “ the end of all things in travel.” There was certainly the railway up Snowdon, but the pass was hard on horseflesh, and most visitors had their glorious rambles and



Photo

BEDDGELERT

Underwood Press Service

A typical Welsh corner with rushing stream and great ridges soaring into the mist. The village owes its sentimental fame to verses written round an old Welsh legend in 1800 by the Hon. Wm. Spencer.

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scrambles, varied by a little slate-quarry exploration—willing or otherwise. Every time the visitor was lost, he was enmeshed in a maze of quarries, active and quiescent. In the coves of Snowdon, easily accessible from this side, are many lonely gorges, lofty cliffs, and fine waterfalls. No ! Llanberis will never be eclipsed (like Bethesda), for the quarries are now worked on less ghastly lines, and trams and trails are not the maze they used to be. From Penygwryd there is a wonderful piece of road inclining into Nant Gwynant, and so down to the sea. One can avoid some of the motor road by taking a steep track with a broken culvert or two for the descent. This side of Snowdon is fine. Though the views of the main peaks are fugitive—seen a few yards and then lost—the great rising shoulders, all shaggy with wood, with purple protrusions of rock and mighty rifts, are constant in their beauty. The road down Nant Gwynant tempts one to superlatives ; the person who is really disappointed in its glories has yet to be met. At one point there is a deep rift in the mountain, over which the upper rocks of Snowdon seem to hang—see this in the red glow of the winter sun when the snow is down deep.

Beddgelert is the next point, after the two llynys among the trees. Here, in the tiny crumpled village, the road splits for Rhyd-ddu and Carnarvon by Llyn Quellyn. At one time Beddgelert was thought safe from the invasion of the railway

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engineer, but since the War a narrow-gauge line has been laid, which passes by tunnels and galleries through the famous pass of Aberglaslyn. The present effect of the railway on the remote little village is by no means revolutionary; one feels that the iron road has come too late to make any real difference to the life of the Welsh folk here. The motor-car arrived first, and the traffic by rail is infinitesimal.

Rhyd-ddu, at the top of the pass toward Carnarvon, came into fame as the old "Snowdon Ranger" passed out; it is near the peak of Y Garn as well as Snowdon. The road past Llyn Quellyn is pretty, and the descent by Bettws Garmon to Carnarvon is a fine walk. But it must be admitted that from this side the summit of Snowdon does not appear at its best. The great Marconi station with its lofty lattice girders is prominent in the centre of a wide grassy moor, with some rather lumpish hills around. Near Rhyd-ddu, there is a pass-road across to Nantlle, but the slate industry has left its unsightly mountains of rubbish and raw gashes in the rocks. The finest view seems to be toward Braich-y-pwll and Cardigan Bay, for the Snowdon peaks are hidden behind lower ridges.

Beddgelert deserves more than a passing reference. Its church is an interesting relic, built partly on the foundations of an ancient abbey, and with a certain amount of pre-worked material, visible in the newer walls. There are fine views

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from the meadows up to Snowdon, which here shows a majestic grey or blue cone over the nearer hills. Nowadays, no one seems to believe the legend of the dog Gelert's grave, which it was stated gave name to the district. There are several cart-roads among the hills, say toward Cynicht, which give access to fine upland rambles. They are not available as through routes for wheels, and can be heartily dispraised for travel except on foot. Perhaps Beddgelert may furnish excuse for a note about the Welsh chapels met in our wanderings—why are these places of worship so gratuitously ugly? Even the biggest are no better, nay, they are worse than the wee Ebenezers and Bethels at the village cross-roads. This is no sarcasm against Welsh religious sincerity, nor attempted cheap wit, for these chapels must have been as expensive to build and furnish as nobler-looking edifices. Possibly, in the first instance, Nonconformity revolted against the orthodox idea and system of religious architecture as well as of government, and every taste and ideal was reversed. Hence the first ugly boxes—which became the convention! A visitor to Beddgelert might be pardoned a question when, for the little knot of houses, he found one church and two monstrous chapels. The church itself seems big enough to hold all the worshippers within easy distance—yet one finds that the great tabernacles are at times crowded and always well attended!

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The last miles of our beautiful road from Bettws-y-Coed, across Snowdonia, go through the pass of Aberglaslyn, and one regrets the facility with which they are passed. The route sweeps round the alluvial flat of Beddgelert, tips up and down a wee incline or two, is shadowed by coppice and listens to the plash of many waters. Then it enters a great portal among the rocks, and for some distance road and river are squeezed by great cliffs to which larches cling. This pass of Aberglaslyn is in its way the finest sight in Britain known to the writer, surpassing for sheer beauty the route up Borrowdale in Cumberland, or Killiecrankie in Scotland. And after the bridge there is a run outward to Cardigan Bay, with many a backward glimpse to Snowdonia's great rocks, coves and ridges.

CHAPTER VI

THE MENAI SHORE

THE Menai shore has a magic of its own, far removed from that of the "Holiday Coast," from Prestatyn to Deganwy. Westward from Conway, England is a "foreign" land; the farmers and quarry-folk quietly adhere to a Welsh outlook which breeds poets, musicians and religious orators. This West Wales is not a barren tract, though the wee black cattle and sheep one sometimes comes across may give that impression. The great farms near the tide are stocked with admirable Herefords and Shorthorns, with excellent Shire horses and the biggest English sheep. Where the farms stand high among the mountains, however, the hardy native stock alone is successful in withstanding the harsh gales and poor feeding. The first stretch of the coast beyond Conway mountain is, of course, the long grass marsh, where winter and summer there is admirable grazing. This explains the mystery of Welsh mutton. The sheep are not brought direct from the mountain pastures to market, but put for a time to feed on this short salt herbage, which adds to their weight and quality!

The great stretch of Lavan Sands, extending

The Menai Shore

from this Conway marsh almost to Puffin Island, marks the site of a legendary kingdom. Lavan was defended by a great sea-wall, but the custodian of the barrier neglected his duty, so that one night tide and storm broke through and overwhelmed cornlands and villages, leaving a golden waste of sand, over which the tide ebbs and flows to-day. Up to a century ago, the surface below tide-mark was so sound that coaches and other carriages drove along the level at ebb-tide to avoid the rough and steep track over the hills. On misty days the great bell of Aber church was tolled as a guide to such carriage folk and to wayfarers on foot who were using the short cut toward Anglesey.

Between Conway and Bangor there are few major points of interest, and the quarries, first of granite, then of slate, are too insistent to be pleasant. The little villages are pretty at a distance, if not when they are reached, and are threaded along the great coast road. From the Norman keep at Conway the Welsh withdrew for many miles, and this district remained largely unoccupied until comparatively recent times. The Romans did not love the coast with its steep hills and garrow gorges, and their connecting path from Caerhun, in the Conway, to Segontium, on the Straits, passes high up and far inland.

The type of Welshman who drifted down into the Penmaenmawr country took no friendly

The Menai Shore

interest in outsiders. The great native principality behind him was not subdued by any storming of this mountain wall, but by the naval strategy of Edward I, who cut off the cornlands of Anglesey from Llewelyn's garrison and caused him to take the open field (where he had no chance of success) instead of waging his favourite guerilla warfare. To-day the great face of Penmaenmawr is gradually slipping away—in railway waggons, motor trucks, and the holds of small coasters. One prefers to avoid the quarries, though at the top of the 1500 feet ridge there are glorious rambles, with views extending to Anglesey, the Isle of Man, and along the whole coast of North Wales.

The villages and cottages hereabouts are not particularly picturesque; they are clean and respectable, and so are their people generally. The only Welsh folk I have ever disliked are the idle and talkative sort ("an empty pot makes the most noise"—but sometimes the Welsh can be silenced by a timely filling at the bar). Other people agree that the steady Welsh worker, whether shepherd or miner, seafarer or fisherman, is the salt of the earth. I claim very little for those who are merely salesmen, touts, agents, or merchants of other people's industry. On the holiday coast to the east of Deganwy, the latter type is far more prominent and gives a false impression of a great little nation.

The modern road-user finds little of the old-time

The Menai Shore

difficulty of storming the passes along this road, but it has been greatly altered even since the days of Telford, who found the route across the terraces without climbing up the headland at Penmaenmawr. At first the way was a steep bridle-path, but later a road was cut at a better place, but even this was so steep that the great Dr. Samuel Johnson was glad when he saw the last of Penmaenmawr. People who were not in a desperate hurry to reach Ireland took shipping from either Chester or Liverpool rather than storm the passes of this rugged route.

Llanfairfechan and Aber are pretty places—away from the noisy road and railway. The former is largely a “select” seaside resort with a grand view; the latter has in addition a famous waterfall tucked away in a nook of the hills. It is not a Niagara in volume in summer, though one has seen it, miles away at sea, after a week of heavy rain. Nor is it very romantic in situation. So far as one is aware, the only spirit with which it is haunted is that of danger for the visitors who scramble up the great loose rock slides for ferns and flowers. The paths from the foot of the fall to the upper glen and the lip of the fall are generally rather insecure, and are better avoided. One can take a wider and safer sweep, avoiding the Aber Fall altogether, if one desires to climb the Carneddws from the coast.

Bangor is, of course, a place of much history if only for its cathedral—which is really rather a



Photo

MENAI STRAITS, THE TWO BRIDGES

Telford's graceful Suspension bridge, opened in 1826, still carries the road traffic to Anglesey. The

L.M.S.

The Menai Shore

worn monument to the savagery of both English and Welsh. It seems to have fallen victim to every outburst from Snowdonia, to have suffered recapture, the usual vandalism when bigotry changed its tide and wiped out the old monuments. And at every change it lost more by rebuilding than probably any similar structure in Wales. It is a bold affair to compare Bangor with Carlisle, but both cathedrals have been crippled, stripped, and stunted by the misfortune of their position in the forefront of raid and war. Bangor cathedral is not obvious from road or sea. It lies in a hollow as though unwishful to see any more of the troubled world. The University with its tower is far more apparent as one approaches the town, which is predominantly Welsh.

The Ogwen river, which comes down from the Glyders and the Carneddys, is a wonderful line of approach to the Menai Straits. There are now motor-buses as well as the railway up to Bethesda. The little chapel community spread into a thriving town when the great veins of purple slate were quarried, and the English cognomen stuck fast. Years ago one remembers a concert in England where a choir of Bethesda quarrymen competed, and my neighbours had a fierce dispute whether the chapel was in Lancashire or Yorkshire. But there was something distinctly not English about the singing of the choir. The Welsh is traditionally a musical nation, and the Eisteddfod or competitive movement has added much to their pride.

The Menai Shore

Occasionally a judge will decline to say smooth things about voices and methods ; occasionally a choir from England rushes over to the National Eisteddfod and captures the chief prize—which is humiliating to the Welsh singers and conductors, who have been over-fed on praise. But, criticism apart, the standard of Welsh music is really high, and reflects the spirit of the nation.

Up the Ogwen goes the old Telford road to Capel Curig, Corwen, Shrewsbury and London, in its day a mighty engineering feat and certainly admirably surveyed. No road engineer has yet found an easier line from Menai Straits to England. But enough of that—let us turn to another aspect of the Menai shore. Probably the most interesting voyage in Wales is that from Llandudno round Great Orme and past Puffin Island into the Straits and down to Carnarvon. The tides run like strong rivers, but the current sets up and down at short intervals and one can trust to being helped somewhere on the sail.

On such a trip as this one watches the shipping, of which the Strait has quite a variety. In August there are scores of smart racing yachts, assembled for social recreation and competitions, and picturesque indeed they look with their shining spars and white, brown or red sheets against a background of green foliage. But more interesting are the coasters, steam and sail, which lie up the tidal creeks, taking on cargoes of slate and granite,

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and threading the maze of reefs, currents, rips and shoals. During the Great War these unassuming craft did national service in carrying food to the little lost village ports, beyond railways, between Falmouth and the Firth of Clyde. One, at least, became a "mystery ship," and did service against German submarines.

This was the *Mary B. Mitchell*, a three-masted top-sail schooner, owned by Lord Penrhyn, and used for the cargoes of his great slate quarries. Built at Carrickfergus in 1892, and registered at Beaumaris, she is 129 feet in length and of 210 gross tonnage. In April, 1916, she was lying at Falmouth, waiting for a cargo of china clay, when the Admiralty requisitioned her "for special service." She was armed with three hidden guns, one a 12-pounder and the other two 3-pounders, and sailed as the first "mystery ship" against the submarines which were stalking the big food-ships entering the Channel. The *Mary Mitchell* had many wild experiences in storm and calm. Unlike the steam trawlers, who had to return to port every week-end to coal, she was able to keep her beat on the seas on month-long vigils. More than once her captain and crew found her lack of motive power a terrific strain when she lay immovable on the glassy sea with an enemy submarine torpedoing other craft on the horizon, and nicely out of range of her pop-guns. She had her day at last. At times she tackled several submarines and gave—and sustained—much

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damage. The submarine was allowed to fire first and often until it was decoyed within effective range of the tiny hidden battery. At the right moment a dramatic change took place—deck houses and bulwarks dropped down, and the *Mary Mitchell* (she had lost her middle name by this time) opened a deadly fire. Usually the submarine dived before the little pea-shooters could do any extensive damage. One at any rate was foiled rather than deterred, as it had two fights on the same day with the belligerent *Mary*, a ship which returned to the old service through the Straits soon after the end of the War.

The two immense bridges which span the Straits, carrying road and rail to Anglesey, are by way of being “sights,” and visitors are expected to enthuse over their dimensions and span. Some are inclined to think that Telford’s spidery suspension is a reproach; but after a century the science of engineering cannot find a better bridge. The old iron structure built for coaches to Holyhead has to serve for the immense and heavy road traffic of to-day, and we are regularly informed that it baulks under the new strain. Substitution, however, is apparently not dreamt of by the authorities until a structure breaks down and deposits some load or other in the tide. Still, one would regret to miss the high-level roadway, beneath which the schooners can pass without their mast-heads touching. It is a



Photo

CARNARVON CASTLE

Sport & General

Here was born the "Prince of Wales who could speak no English," the eldest son of Edward I. The shell of the old Castle remains wonderfully intact, but our picture shows the inferior condition inside the walls.

The Menai Shore

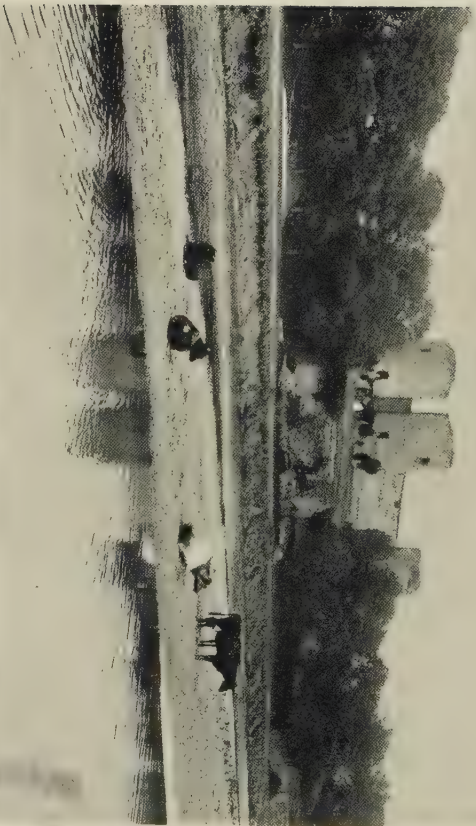
pretty sort of bridge in its way. George Stephenson's tubular railway bridge, half a mile further down stream, however, has a good deal of his Northumbrian character about it : he built with a margin of strength which, we are informed, is not reached by the heavy locomotives and long lines of trucks which pass over it to-day. It is a tunnel, boxed in mid-air, and to the railway traveller, rather a nuisance : instead of a wonderful half-vertical glimpse up and down the Straits, there is semi-darkness and a horrid racket reverberating from the iron plates. No, Stephenson's tubes are prettier to look at from a distance than to travel through. The tubular bridge at Conway is designed on similar lines.

The boat passes down the Straits, with Anglesey now opening to level farm lands on one side, and the hills rising steeply towards Snowdonia on the other. There are gentlemen's seats and parks here and there, but no ruin or magnificent building within sight. At Port Dinorwic the Llanberis slates are shipped, and, along a tortuous channel, we come to Carnarvon, with those beautiful mountains, The Rivals, in front, more imposing than great Snowdon, which lies back behind foothills and sloping moors. Only a small steamer can come to the jetty at this ancient port. The big Liverpool boats stand off, and soon pass into a shallow hook of water inside Carnarvon bar, with the Anglesey rabbit warrens on one side and a shingly level on the other. The

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seamen are soon swinging the lead, for the navigation is tortuous and sometimes the channel changes. "By the mark four," "by the mark less four" is called as the steamer creeps at slow speed out to the bar, seems almost to touch the shingle, and then goes far into Carnarvon Bay before reaching deep water, where a course can be steered north-west for the stacks of Holy Isle, on the return voyage to the Mersey.

Carnarvon is on the edge of real Wales ; hitherto we have visited only the Welsh villages where the people speak English fairly easily, but beyond Carnarvon the native tongue is the exclusive vehicle of talk in home, market, pulpit, and even concert room. This fact need not deter us ; one finds that there is usually some one about lodgings, farm or inn, who has the English as a relic maybe of school lessons. Whether Edward I built Carnarvon Castle for more than military security cannot be proved, but it is obvious that the Welsh did not retire from its zone. Probably the smaller land owners who were not dispossessed by Edward remained as a centre for Welsh culture against any possible domination. The English garrison held peaceful markets within and without the walled town to which the natives came to trade. Pennant, a Flintshire Welshman, called the castle "that most magnificent badge of our subjection," but he wrote centuries after the place represented anything more than an historic sentiment.



Photo

RHUDDLAN CASTLE, ON THE RIVER CLWYD

L.M.S.

Built about 1277 by Edward I on the concentric plan of Beaumaris, Harlech and Caerphilly, this fortress dominated the Clwyd egress from Wales. Richard II was prisoner here in 1399.

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Everyone is familiar with pictures of the great fortress, built in 1285, and with the legend, which the historians are again accepting, that Edward II was born at Carnarvon, but not in the reputed chamber of the Eagle Tower. His father was settling some political affairs at Rhuddlan Castle when the welcome news of a son and heir arrived, and he promptly touched the sentiment of the Welsh Parliament and captured their acquiescence by the announcement of "A Prince of Wales who could speak no English." The great towers above the Seoint river, with the walled town and protected quays, must have been a tough place for the insurgent Welsh to besiege, and it rarely gave way to force until the Civil War and gunpowder altered the whole aspect of war. Carnarvon, perched on a rocky site, would be the world's ideal of an ancient fortress; even on its low promontory—with the tide coming up to the water-gate, and with great commanding rock ridges shouldering above—it is a glorious place indeed. My first acquaintance with the pile was timed for a June morning at 5 a.m. I had crossed by the night boat from Dublin, changed trains at Bangor, and arrived at Carnarvon with the first mails and newspapers. There was no one about, no house open for breakfast, so a saunter about the empty quay and city wall brought me to the castle—all locked up, of course, but without the sentry, who might have forbidden intrusion. Some workmen engaged on a scheme of

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restoration had left a tall ladder reared against the curtain joining towers, and up I climbed. For nearly two hours the whole castle was my conquest, and after the first gang of workmen came in at the King's Gate, I sauntered out into the square, unchallenged.

It is impossible to describe this royal castle in a few words ; it is ponderous because it is so big, but it is not really so sombre, say, as Conway or Rhuddlan, and life in some of its rooms might be happy enough. As a great military centre it was doubtless the key to North Wales, for the splendour and power of the patriot princes never rose very high after its completion. Some of the towers could be defended by three tiers of archers shooting through those long narrow slits in the masonry.

The old town walls of Carnarvon are still intact, as at Conway and Tenby, and really one prefers their freedom to the stately rock-like rooms where kings and princes and military governors once held watch and ward over Wales. Carnarvon Castle woke from its ancient calm on a day in the summer of 1911 (July 25th), when King George V of England invested his son with great historic ceremony as Prince of Wales. He was the first Prince to be invested with power in his own principality, for the first infant, though born within the walls of Carnarvon, was ceremoniously received as a prince at Lincoln.

“ The Prince was attired in the traditional

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close-girt surcoat of crimson velvet, with an ermine tipper over his shoulders. His father, the King, placed the golden demi-crown on his head, the ring on his finger, and the silver rod into his hand. Having been girt with the sword and presented with his patent, the Prince did homage to his Sovereign, who, in the sight of all, saluted him on either cheek, and seated him on the throne at his right hand. The Prince then addressed a modest little speech to his people, concluding with the words, 'I hope to do my duty to my King, to Wales, and to you all!'"

ANGLESEY.—Of course, one cannot run down the Snowdon shore of the Straits without aspiring to a trip in Anglesey opposite, and the excursion is well worth while. Many miles of the island can be crossed in a day of motoring, or the trip may take two or more days and be full of pleasure all the time.

The west and north coasts are interesting, with their rock-coves, tiny harbours, and the great stacks at Holyhead, with their bird-cliffs and lighthouses which guide and warn the world's shipping. The central area is largely moorish, with cromlechs and camps, kistvaens and standing-stones, with Druid circles and avenues; also with the signs at Paris mountain of copper workings from prehistoric times up to almost yesterday. At one time, the output of Anglesey governed the copper markets of the world, but to-day all is in ruin. The owners of mineral

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rights made immense fortunes—some of which have been squandered in historic follies. The south side of the island has a few meagre ruins of abbeys and churches, but most of it is ordinary grazing land, tailing off into sandy warrens, where the most valuable product is rabbit fur and reeds, which are woven into baskets. In the old times the princes of North Wales had a palace at Aberffraw and from their fields in Anglesey supplied the fighters in Snowdonia with food. King Edward's fleet is said to have cut the line of communication across the Straits, and so Snowdonia was slowly reduced, by hunger as by the sword. The palace at Aberffraw has entirely disappeared long ago.

There is a great road—the last section of Telford's route for coaches from Shrewsbury—through Anglesey to Holyhead (or *Caer Cybi*), but no place of unusual interest is touched on the way. The road passes near *Llangefni*, but *Beaumaris*, with its ruined castle, *Caer Cybi*, with its wonderful harbour and soaring stacks, and *Amlwch*, in its rift among the northern cliffs, are more important. Anglesey is an island of lanes and leisure rather than roads and speed. Its chief characteristic seems to be primitive ruined churches with legends long and often gloomy and gory. Near *Llanerchymedd* there used to be the wells of two saints, one of whom travelled west from *Ynys Seiriol* or Puffin Island, and the other east from the opposite direction. Matthew



Photo

AMLWCH, A PORT OF ANGLESEY

L. M. S.

The rather exposed harbour was hacked out of native rock to accommodate the seaborne commerce of the Parys copper mine, and in heavy weather its safety was secured by a heavy timber boom across the entrance.

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Arnold referred to these wells (one of which has disappeared) in lines about "Seiriol the Bright" and "Cybi the Dark":

"In the bare midst of Anglesey they show
Two springs, which close by one another play,
And 'thirteen hundred years ago,' they say,
'Two saints met often where these waters flow.'"

Seiriol, who had the sun behind him on his journey, was bright of face, but Cybi had the darkness of sunburn.

A finer path than the one from Beaumaris, following the cliffs all the way to Holyhead, would need a lot of finding. For one thing the procession of passing ships, from the wee Irish potato and egg boats to the great 20,000-ton American liners, is unique. Anything passing through St. George's Channel and entering Liverpool Bay on a clear day must be visible from the cliffs. Sea birds in myriads scream and wheel; there are ruined oratories and chapels among the rocks, primitive village churches in the lonely fields. Puffin Island, or Ynys Seiriol, stands at the deepest opening to Menai Straits, and ages ago it had its priests; Penmon Priory is a mere shell. In the district round Lynas Head were bred the Tudors whose offspring ultimately won the crown of England and Wales on Bosworth field. Lynas Head has turned its grim face toward many a storm and wreck before and since the day of 1859 when the *Royal Charter*, with its Australian

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gold carriers, perished almost in sight of home. Red Wharf and Dulas bays still see a lot of cargo boats sheltering against any south-west hurricane sweeping up St. George's Channel; they are favourite and safe anchorages. Bull Bay and Cemmaes are interesting, but after Carmel Head, which seems but a stone's-throw from the outlying reef of the Skerries, the rocks of Church Bay are less and less interesting as they gradually dwindle into the flat and marsh near the town of Holyhead. The inlet which forms the harbour is rather open to the north-west, though a long breakwater (one and a half miles) has been built for shelter, and it was expected to form a harbour of refuge for the British Fleet. Holyhead, however, is accustomed to hopes disappointed; every few years it aspires to become a landing port for the American service, but even by the use of tenders the gain in time for passengers and mails is small compared with the conveniences of Liverpool. The harbour is too shallow for a really big steamer to enter at any time of tide. However, Holyhead makes the best of its opportunities; the cross-Channel service to Ireland is its own, and on that it thrives, partly as a seaport and partly as a railway town, and without any particular industries of its own apart from these.

Not being able to make Holyhead roads a deep-water port, Nature has favoured the place with a mass of lofty cliffs to west and south, the like of which is probably unknown in Britain.

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Certainly neither Cornwall nor Yorkshire can compete. In a couple of hours one may walk along the cliff edge, cross the bridge to the South Stack, and see many great sights, but a full day is really too short for all the vertical views down the broken rocks to roaring tides, the sea birds, and the wonderful line of peaks from Penmaenmawr, across Snowdonia to the Rivals. Across the sea to the west there are the hazy outlines of the Wicklow Hills.

After Holy Isle, or *Caer Cybi*, the cliffs soon disappear, and the sandy, reedy south coast presents but few relics of interest to the antiquarian. After *Rhosneigr* it is usual to cut across the lower half of the island to *Llanfairpwllgwyngyll*, the shortened form of a village name which extends to fifty-eight letters and nineteen syllables. Here the beauties of Menai Straits begin ; there is a wonderful church and burial place on a quiet islet, and after the village of Menai Bridge one reaches the glorious woods of the Straits and so completes the round of Anglesey.

CHAPTER VII

THE LLEYN PENINSULA

FROM Carnarvon the south road leads into remotest North Wales, to a land beyond railways where half a century ago most of the traffic and supplies came in by sailing schooners and dingy steam coasters. The men of Nevin in particular were always seafarers, and captains and officers from the village may be met in any blue-water port in the world. After a vigorous life on the ocean wave, many return to their native village to an equally vigorous retirement ; the little trades of Nevin are carried on by these worthies and their women folk, and the whole community is happy and prosperous.

Nowadays Lleyn is criss-crossed with motor-bus routes, and its old seclusion has vanished, bringing many changes to the people. Where, in pre-war days, one saw a string of farmers' traps jogging sedately down the lanes to Pwllheli market, there is now a wide tar-macadam road with leviathan buses piled high with farm produce, covering the miles at three times the speed of horses. From Aberdaron, "the last village in North Wales," the sixteen miles to and from market was a sober day's journey in itself in the



Photo

ABERSOCH, IN THE LLEYN PENINSULA

L. H. Chesterton

This is one of the prettiest and quietest places on the coast of Wales. The Isles of St. Tudwal, just off shore, are remarkable. So is Porth Nigel, or Hell's Mouth, a bay with a terrible record of shipwrecks, a few miles further west.

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old time, and therefore never undertaken without much preparation. One must have goods to sell and to buy. Now—they run to Pwllheli by the afternoon bus in order to see the pictures! These villagers are enthusiasts about the cinema show, and their English is kept up by reading the subtitles on the screen. At least, so said an old fisherman to me. “I cannot read the English, and therefore I rarely go to the pictures, for the young folks cannot read them to me without somebody interfering.” One knows that all this must be very sad to the ultra-Welsh patriots of the district, who would almost have the English taken from the schools, though they know that the industries of Lleyn cannot afford a livelihood for half the young folks who are growing up.

At Carnarvon one breathes the shrewd mountain air of Snowdonia, and is nerved to the history of war and tumult. In a few miles, however, with the Straits gleaming here and there through the timbered park-like lands, the air loses its sharpness and becomes more permeated with softness. In the cottage fences the fuchsias hang out red candelabra most of the year, and sub-tropical plants, yuccas, palms, &c., are more evident and vigorous with every mile. And the spirit also changes, for we are now travelling a great and famous pilgrim’s way. Out beyond the tip of the Lleyn peninsula is Bardsey, a Welsh Iona almost, where the dust of the saints Dyfrig, Deiniol and Beuno mingles with that of kings

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and princes of Snowdonia, and with that of twenty thousand other devotees who have died on the island.

The presence of a cloud of saints has always kept a hold on the popular imagination, and one likes to recall Pennant's description of 1781, when he sailed across the narrow strait to the isle :

The mariners seemed tintured with the piety of the place, for they had not rowed far, but they made a full stop, pulled off their hats, and offered up a short prayer. After doubling a headland, the island appears full in view ; we passed under the lofty mountains which form one side. After doubling the farther end, we put into a little sandy creek, bounded by low rocks, as is the whole level part. On landing, I found all this tract a very fertile plain, and well cultivated, and productive of everything which the land affords. The abbot's house is a large stone building, inhabited by several of the natives ; not far from it is a singular chapel or oratory, being a long arched edifice, with an isolated stone altar near the east end.

From Northern Wales, towards Bardsey (Ynys Enlli, the isle in the current) there is a famous " pilgrim's way," and, indeed, Lleyn is studded with remains of shrines and holy wells. At Clynnog Fawr we meet the first of both, dedicated to St. Beuno, whose influence seemed to extend from Holywell in Flintshire, where he performed

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the miracle of replacing the severed head of his niece, St. Winifrede, on her shoulders, to this Clynnog, to Nevin and to Bardsey. He is reputed to be buried in each of these churches, and when a prayer was made that he would reveal himself on the matter, the saint most courteously appeared in all.

In the wonderful old church at Clynnog Fawr there is a chapel which formerly contained St. Beuno's shrine or tomb, and Pennant in his tour reports that he

once saw on it a feather bed on which a poor paralytic from Merionethshire had lain the whole night after ablution in the neighbouring well.

The chapel of St. Beuno at Clynnog Fawr has been put in order; the whole church, which Leland described as "the fayrest Chirch yn ol Carnarvonshire," is in need of skilled repair. A visit to it on a Welsh winter day shows that rain penetrates very far indeed into the edifice and is ruining roof and walls. The curious old alms-chest, formed out of one solid piece of oak and fastened with iron hoops and locks, does not, in its present state, justify the local proverb "You may as well try to break St. Beuno's chest." It is a "dug-out," destitute of panels or decoration, and simply constructed out of the tree with the axe. In many old parish churches there are muniment chests of bog oak, bigger, stronger,

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and at least with as much history as that at Clynnog Fawr. The dog-tongs here are rather remarkable; they are of hand-wrought iron, extend on the lazy tongs principle, and were used to seize any rowdy collie which interrupted the church service. This was done most effectively, and without any danger to the catcher or any chance of its escape. There is a good cromlech at Clynnog, which is worth seeing.

The next section of the journey through Lleyn includes a walk over Yr Eifl, three shapely peaks more commonly known as the Rivals, an English corruption of the Welsh name. A cloud-cap here presages the coming of rainy weather from Ireland, but one's personal experiences include a search for the famous primitive camps and forts and villages during a real rain-storm on the heights. Standing, as the ridge does, away from greater peaks, it commands a wide view of Snowdonia, of Anglesey and away down the coast to Harlech, as well as of its own peninsula spread out like a raised coloured map. The seaward side of the western peak ends abruptly; there must always have been a sharp declivity to the sea, but the granite quarries are rapidly bringing it to a sheer. Here and there on these heights are relics of camps of earliest Britons, proving that from the earliest settlements the land must have been inhabited, and probably the choice of high-altitude homes was due to the fact that most of the "river bottom" was marsh and jungle. When grain



Photo

LLANBEDROG MOUNTAIN, NEAR PWLLHELI

Here are shown the rich shades and deep foliage typical of Cardigan Bay, where the winters are almost the mildest in Britain.

L.M.S.



The Lleyn Peninsula

began to be cultivated, and the forest thrust back, the primitive villages were rebuilt at a lower elevation, but ruins among the Rivals show that the main township, with its defensive trenches and gateways, remained on high for many generations. These records are well worth the study of anybody interested in ancient things, but the view across land and sea and mountain is more attractive to men and women of normal mind.

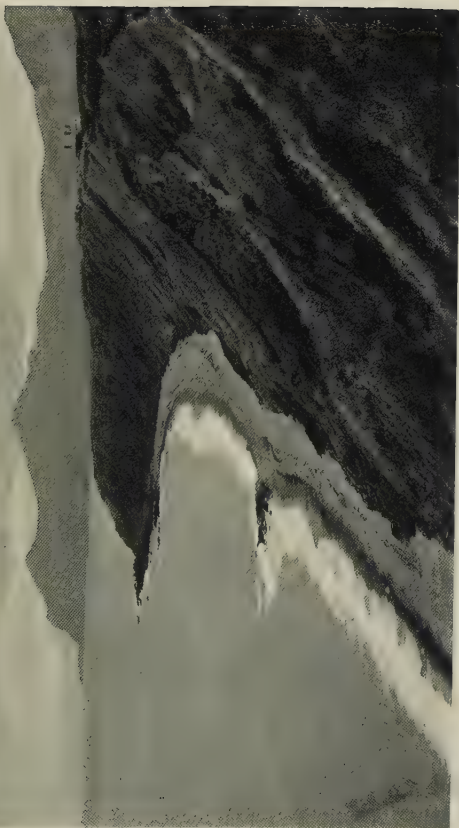
The road into Nevin gives many a glimpse of Carnarvon Bay, surely the least known shore in England and Wales, though at some time the countryside was considered important. Edward I held a tournament here in 1284 to celebrate his conquest of Wales, and the site may still be traced by the Welsh names of the various stations. The shore below the cliff at Nevin is excellent, but some of the coves and beaches hereabout are changeable. One party of visitors pitched their tents near a bay with a wonderful stretch of sand. During the night a gale blew, and at daybreak the whole front was covered with large stones, not a bit of sand being visible. The coast down to Braich-y-pwll is a succession of rocky headlands, deep coves and sandy bays. Porth Dinlleyn is the largest of these, and is a possible harbour for coasting service. Indeed, a century ago it was considered as a possible cross-Channel port for Ireland, and a railway Bill was supported in Parliament to build a new railway across Wales from Shrewsbury to this excellent point. The

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great George Stephenson, however, was behind a rival project, which contemplated a railway bridge across Menai Straits and a new port at Holyhead, which needed considerable harbour protection then as now. Perhaps it is good fortune for the Lleyn peninsula that the seals now play on the rocks and tumble in the deep water of Porth Dinlleyn, which might have been the nucleus of a new Welsh city.

The narrowing peninsula holds many cromlechs and strongholds, but there is, of course, nothing to equal Tre'r Caerau (the town of fortresses) on the third peak of Yr Eifl, with its three high and massive walls, enclosing upwards of five acres covered with hut foundations. The outer villages are small ; they are either crowded at cross-roads, nested in some cove among the sea-cliffs, or trailed out along the winding lanes. In themselves they are not very picturesque, but hold considerable homely charm. The whole countryside of cottages and small farms, with wee cultivated and pasture enclosures, makes a strong appeal. One can believe that life on a limited income would go easily here, if one were of primitive needs and able to comprehend the Welsh character and tongue.

At Braich-y-pwll, North Wales reaches its westernmost point. It is a tall, tide-riven headland, but above the line of water-dashed cliffs the turf is soft and smooth, and there is a mantle of heather. As one wanders about the open hills,



Photo

NEVIN AND "THE RIVALS"

G. W. R.

The whole coast of Lleyn peninsula is a succession of rocky headlands, deep coves and sandy bays. The villages breed some of the finest seafarers, officers and men alike, in our Mercantile Marine.



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traces of small mines and quarries are often discovered ; the search for mineral wealth in Wales has been constant for ages, and few square miles of country anywhere are free from tips and broken rock faces, the work of industrious men. From the top of the headland there is a grand view, the most conspicuous new point being Bardsey, about two miles across restless sea currents. The island is a couple of miles long by half a mile broad, and on the east side rises to a ridge of about 500 feet. As already indicated, it was formerly regarded as a very holy place, and in the days of the Old Faith, two pilgrimages to it were regarded as equal to one trip to Rome. To my mind the advantage lay with the pilgrim to the Holy City. The difficulties of travel in West Wales were great indeed in comparison with the well-known and much-frequented paths which led across France and Italy to Rome.

The sight of Braich-y-pwll is the little well of Our Lady (Ffynnon Fair), at the foot of a steep rock stair and only accessible at low water. One's personal experience was on a day with comparatively calm tide, yet as the stair into the cove was descended, the waves crashed heavily on the rocks around and burst in a smother of white smoke. The roughly-hewn steps were streaming ; they pass down a corner of rock and end on a wet platform, opposite which is the triangular rent in the rocks, to reach which it is necessary to step across a ledge on which

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occasional waves lift and burst. At high tide this ledge is submerged and in rough weather the place is really dangerous. Only a few years ago a daughter of Judge Parry was swept from the rocks and drowned. There is no chance of rescue in that boiling surf, and even a strong swimmer would be dashed to death on the rocks.

On my visit the crossing was only a question of choosing the right moment after a wave had broken. The holy well is a three-cornered gap which collects drops of fresh water falling from the cliff overhead. At low tide the quality is said to be excellent, but now it was brackish with the spray thrown by the waves. One can sit by the well and look across the cove to Bardsey, near and yet far off. In the old days devotees believed that if they could but carry a mouthful of the sacred well water up the rock stair and into the chapel, Eglwys Fair, which stood above, their next wish, whatever it might be, would be granted. The chapel of the well, however, has long disappeared, though one may trace its foundations and enclosures on the grassy ledge above. Tradition informs us that the priests of Bardsey came to the cove of the Wishing Well and chapel with their boat to embark pilgrims for the isle. If such were really the case, no wonder that two trips across the channel were equal to a pilgrimage to Rome. Few Welsh fishermen of the present day would venture a boat among these snags and surges, and fewer devotees would

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try the risky game of leaping from the rocks to a jumping, swinging craft in the cove.

Back in the lane to Aberdaron, near the farm which was formerly a hostel for pilgrims, is a stone marked

C	35
N	13
P	18
S	7½

the distances to Carnarvon, Nevin, Pwllheli, and Sarn respectively. It is No. 1 milestone of North Wales.

In this Wales beyond railways, the lines are not marked by sign-posts or motor-route numbers, and their wanderings between the turf walls are tortuous. It is possible, but not too safe, to wander by little sheep tracks along the cliff edges, and sometimes one may descend to a sandy bay for a short distance. Practically every headland of Lleyn stands knee-deep in the sea, and there is rarely the extensive undercliff of, say, the Yorkshire coast. In inquiring his way, the wanderer must remember that the people are thoroughly Welsh; his English is probably very different in inflection from the latter language as taught by a Welsh schoolmaster. Often enough a simple request will have to be repeated before it is understood. Perhaps one's North-Country accent is uncouth to listeners in these parts, but really there has been little difficulty. A grin and

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patience solve most troubles. The muttered "No English" has been but rarely one's experience in the lanes of remotest Wales, though it is fairly often heard in railway journeys and around the markets of these Cardigan Bay counties.

Aberdaron is a small village with two inns and a church, situated at the mouth of a little stream which has caused a shingle and sand lodgment large enough to make a safe landing for fishermen and for the farmers who come here from Bardsey. Port Meudwy (the hermit's harbour) was the tiny creek from which robust pilgrims sailed to the Isle of Saints. Some time ago it was rumoured that Bardsey was about to be evacuated by its people, and the self-styled "King" threatened to retire to a workhouse on the mainland. As the island contributes neither rates nor taxes to county or national exchequers, this was hardly fair. However, at the time of writing, the place is practically full, about sixty being the average population, and they possess a large motor boat, which runs over to Aberdaron fairly regularly with their surplus farm and sea produce, and for supplies. The little strand, with its two gull islands, is a pretty stretch between the high cliffs. The church is rather primitive, but its dimensions seem large for any possible congregation, especially when one recalls that half or more of the villagers attend the two or three chapels on the hillside, and that in the lonely shelves of country out to Braich-y-pwll there

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are at least two more large chapels. The Welshman seems to be as prodigal in his chapel arrangements as the Scot is alleged to be in regard to schools, and the Irish in regard, say, to shebeens. All these charges, one must hasten to add, are wilfully libellous.

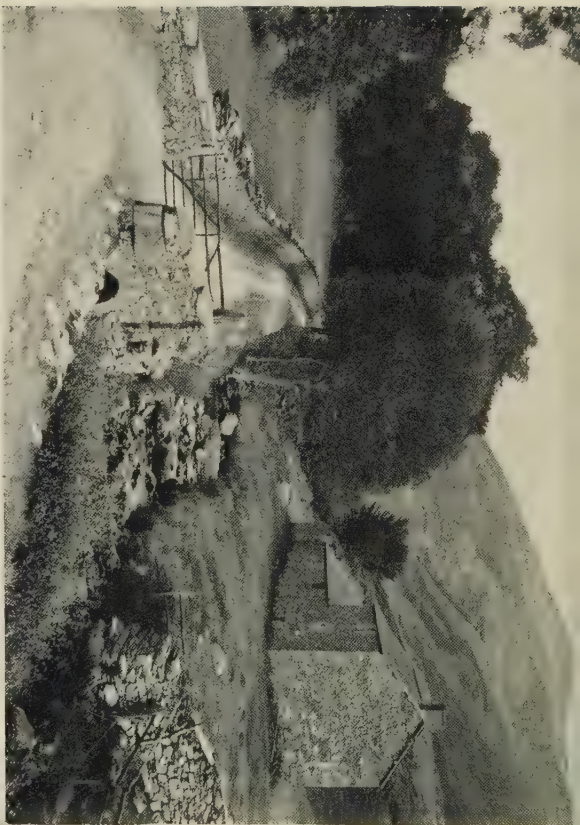
There is a grand ramble from Aberdaron along the coast to Abersoch, one in which there is some cliff rambling as well as shore travel. For the most part, there is a belt of firm sand between the cliffs and the normal high tides, but the headlands, where Carn Fadryn and other hills come down to the sea, are intrusive. Porth Nigel or Hell's Mouth is about half-way on the route, and from the rock-ridge, either at Rhiw or on the Abersoch side, it is a remarkable sight. The waters seem charged with tints of blue and green and ivory, with touches of dark gold where the waves kiss the shore. One wonders if this great bay, about four miles across, obtained its uncompromising name from its danger to ships in the days when the approaches to the Irish Sea were less well lighted, and when sailing vessels were practically helpless in the fierce storms which swept them along from the Atlantic. The farm country inland from Porth Nigel is for the most part level, and fertile in the ordinary sense. The cattle of Lleyn are rather better than those of the Welsh upland farms, but one must go further along Cardigan Bay to meet with belted Holsteins, white-faced Herefords, and the excellent dual-purpose

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Shorthorn, kept where the black native beasts are not considered quite good enough for the pastures.

Over a second ridge, Abersoch is reached, and with it the limits of tourist-land. The wanderer who has a few hours to spare should devote it to the rocky headland outside Abersoch; more leisured folk will find a week's exploration before them, and that the trip to the isles of St. Tudwal (one of which has traces of a ruined sanctuary) is well worth while. Abersoch is famous for its splendid views and its many relics of primitive times. One begins to feel that the ancients were perhaps far-seeing in building homes and assembling points on land which could not possibly be used for the production of food. At any rate they have so preserved to our archæologists a vast number of puzzles which will not be solved in this generation. Every village church of this end of Wales is worth a visit; there are always relics of monuments, windows, screens, &c., to be seen. With Abersoch begins the good road, and one can hasten hither and thither to the east with little trouble compared with travel in furthest Wales.

But the village is not really dismissed so easily. It is a wee fishing port, yet not typical of the Welsh industry. The harbour is a meandering stream, in which at low tide the yachts lie aground. Moreover, Abersoch has a golf course which attracts its regular visitors from distant England.



Photo

CWM EINION, OR ARTISTS' VALLEY, GLANDYFI

C. Beaumont

A countryside which impresses the visitor as possessing some Cumbrian characteristics. Within easy reach, in these road-motor days, of Machynlleth and Aberystwyth, the beauty of the place is becoming well known.

The Lleyn Peninsula

The Welsh official classes, so to speak, have been conquered by golf : in every townlet the banker, solicitor, doctor, land agent, and their respective tails indulge in the game, and even the Nonconformist brethren have liberated their clergy to occasional indulgence on the links. Yet one does not find the keenness among tradesmen and workers as in Scotland. Golf has developed so rapidly in Wales that it has not known the stage at which it was a poor man's game. This coast of Cardigan Bay, from Abersoch down to Porth, near Aberystwyth, has the proper quality of natural turf in sea-marsh or behind sand-dunes to give a right flavour to the great game. And at Harlech, in particular, the golf rises to, if not above, the standard set by St. Andrews, North Berwick, Westward Ho ! and Hoylake.

From Abersoch the country eastward is more conventional and less Welsh with every mile. The road to Llanbedrog runs for some distance between cliff and marsh, and soon we are in the zone of large but not giant trees. Lleyn is generally so storm-swept that even artificial plantations have but little chance on the ridges, and the long open valleys are too closely grazed by cattle for young timber to get a hold. As the miles pass, the road turns inland to avoid the eastern headland—Mynydd Tir-y-Cwmwd—of Abersoch Bay, and swings through a narrow defile which reminds one of southern Scotland, except that there the road would be at a steep angle and

The Lleyn Peninsula

not level like this. The road passes between high but crumbling rocks where ivy and other vegetation is at the work of disintegration, then suddenly sweeps into a wood, curves down a greasy bit of hill, and one is in Llanbedrog after a fine glimpse over the bay to Pwllheli, Criccieth and Harlech, and with a chance of seeing Snowdon behind the Rivals to the right.

Llanbedrog's collection of some four hundred paintings and engravings by Landseer, Turner, David Cox and Teniers, among other masters, is housed in a mansion, Glyn-y-Weddw, with grounds of some fifty acres, commanding the beautiful bay. The tramroad brings out visitors from Pwllheli to the collection, and doubtless the change is much enjoyed. An art gallery in a land beyond steam seems to be out of place in Britain, but surely the townlets of Italy and Southern France are often pilgrimized with less reason. There is a similar isolated mansion with art treasures at Barnard Castle, on the upper Tees, in Durham. The Bowes Museum is full of treasures which seem alien to the locality, and, indeed, are only studied by casual pilgrims to the town. Barnard Castle, however, owes its collection to a French lady who purchased pictures, tapestries, and china with the intention of endowing her native village as well as the home-town of her British husband. A political revolution caused her to lose touch with France, and she never forgave the peasantry their joyful acceptance of a

The Lleyrn Peninsula

republic. That is the secret of England's loneliest art gallery ; here, in furthest Wales, the story is more homely.

Everyone is recommended to shirk the four miles or so of road into Pwllheli : the fields are level, many of them boggy at times, and at the end one crosses a wide stretch of real marsh. The alternatives are motor-bus, tram-road, and a stroll down the shore to the ancient shore, town, and harbour. The latter is most pleasant, for over the tide one sees the green and blue hills of Merioneth, range beyond range, and there are glimpses over the town of the outer hills of Snowdonia, with their wonderful caps of cloud and with their beautiful patches of light and shade on purple ridges and blue summits.

CHAPTER VIII

UNDER SNOWDON'S LEE—PWLLHELI TO HARLECH

AT Pwllheli the traveller returns to a recognizable holiday shore with its sea-bathing, tennis, boating, golf and kindred occupations. Though there are not the musical attractions and sideshows of Rhyl, Colwyn Bay, and Llandudno, the place is over-run during summer with leisured strangers. The quaint wee town, however, has its own industries—a little fishing and coast-wise navigation and some quarrying, with a good deal of commercial service for Lleyln and similar districts beyond the railways. The extensive motor-bus traffic is proof of this, and the Welsh town is quite aware of the fact. Therefore the old Pwllheli stands back besides its old quays and away from the esplanade, sands and golf links, where disturbers are most numerous. Incidentally the old town beneath the steep bluffs obtains the advantage of their presence when heavy winds are astir; the great blasts from the sea are crushed up against the hills, and in the belt of shattered air-waves old Pwllheli suffers little damage.

Really the holiday resort is an annexe of the working town and of comparatively recent date,



Photo

HARLECH CASTLE

Built in 1283, on a rock-spur 200 feet high, Harlech commands two entrances into Snowdonia and cuts off the way to the south. It was captured by Owen Glyndwr in 1404. A siege during the Wars of the Roses inspired the "March of the Men of Harlech," the Welsh national song.

G. W. R.

Under Snowdon's Lee

its esplanade being opened in 1890. On the other hand the old borough has its first charter from the Black Prince, son of Edward III, who granted it to Nigel de Lorying in consideration of services rendered at the battle of Poitiers. The curious Gimlet Rock or Carreg-yr-Wimbill on the west side of the harbour is gradually disappearing before the onslaughts of the quarrymen. The promontory gives a splendid view of the town, the bay, and the great hanging mountains up to Snowdonia.

The next thirteen miles, on to Portmadoc, were greatly in the public eye some years ago when Mr. Lloyd George, who had spent his active life here, was Premier of England. Great persons pilgrimized to Cardigan Bay in order to see the little school and church at Llanystumdwy, and even Portmadoc, where Mr. Lloyd George had an office as "a little Welsh attorney," was included in their journeys. At times Criccieth saw almost a procession of literary lords, and the annual concert which the Premier gave to the old folks of Llanystumdwy was so crowded with Press representatives that the persons for whom it was really organized could scarcely all be admitted. Photographers dodged about the lanes, by the rivers and on the golf links, in the hope of gaining some unique "action picture" of the great little Welshman. Of course, this hero-worship came to a sudden end with the change of the Coalition Government, when Mr. Lloyd George became

Under Snowdon's Lee

only second leader of the second or unofficial Opposition. Criccieth has not seen its political lords and baronets for these many months, and, in the first year of the political eclipse, there was just one outside newspaper man at the Llanystumdwyl concert. These lines are not written with any political bias, but only to explain the change which this piece of Wales has undergone in recent years.

The main road from Pwllheli to Portmadoc runs practically alongside the railway all the way, and is nearly as dull as any track with an outlook over the sea dares to be. At Criccieth there are some fragments of the castle built by Edward I in 1286 : two towers leading into a court, guarded by ruined walls, and protected on the outside by a double trench. The Welsh residents engaged at Poitiers included Sir Howell y Fwyll, constable of Criccieth Castle, who took the French king prisoner. History explains that on this side of the Llyn Edward I planted many of his military colonists on the good lands taken from the dispossessed princes and nobles, but in a few generations most of the names and estates had been absorbed by Welsh families, though apparently the loyalty to the English Crown never wavered.

The great shelf of country which tilts up towards Snowdonia is most interesting : a place of quiet farms and prattling streams, of little copses and rocky tors, of wee churches and gaunt

Under Snowdon's Lee

chapels, of ruined little places which might have been anything ancient or modern, a land ever rising higher to the sheep walks. Such countryside was the boast of old Wales, for here the beef and meal for warriors holding the passes and shore roads could be produced under quiet conditions. Some of these old places really enshrine the summer retreats of Welsh nobility, and here and there one finds, alas! legend of fire and fury, of treacherous attack by neighbours and resolute defence, even by women, children, and old men, of the sacred hearth and home.

The golf links above Criccieth are on a commanding shoulder of the country: one looks far down the coast and well up into the hills, with a glimpse of Snowdon through a gap. It was here that one witnessed some great international sheep-dog trials in which teams from England and Scotland competed against the natives. These sheep-dog trials have become, in a few years, a sort of outdoor eisteddfod in Wales, a celebration which brings hundreds together in gossiping, excited concourses. In an ordinary trial, the collie is sent out to collect and drive three sheep, to turn them past certain flags and through gates, and an open Maltese cross of hurdles, before penning them in a 6 feet or 8 feet enclosure. With two dogs, the number of sheep is doubled, and there are two pens. The ordinary obstacles are observed, and have to be conquered. On approaching the first pen, three sheep are separated

Under Snowdon's Lee

and driven in, one dog being left there to guard the open end of the hurdles while the other drives the three remaining sheep, perhaps up an incline formed by hurdles and a waggon, to pen them two hundred yards away. Carried out against a careful time-limit and with judges alert for every hesitation or error on the part of either collie or man, the sport is both difficult and exciting.

In international trials such as those held at Criccieth every few years, the tests are much more elaborate, the judging keener, and the excitement more intense. As a sheep-handler, the Welshman is apt to be a little tempestuous, judged by our cold northern standards, and his dog is inclined to be a little reckless and to rush at the flock instead of moving the sheep steadily along. There are, however, some grand shepherds in Wales. It is admitted that shepherds from the Cumbrian fells and the Derbyshire Pennine take the best stakes in Wales, but the standard of Cymric work is rapidly rising all round, and at their own "National," held in various towns in North and South Wales, excellent work is regularly shown. It is a matter of regret, however, that as yet the best working collies in Wales are of English or Scottish origin.

Criccieth has always a cleanly, neighbourly, wind-swept look. Hedges and gardens show that even winter gales rarely have a frosty breath. As a place of business, the little town cannot compare with Portmadoc, some five miles away,

Under Snowdon's Lee

which is almost metropolitan in its choice of three railways. True, two of these are toy lines, used chiefly to bring slates down to the wharves from the mountain quarries, but they are railways just the same, and quite zealous in their determination not to intercommunicate with the Cambrian-Great Western system, with its ordinary gauge. One station is in the fields far inland, and the other stands next the slate wharves on the opposite side of the town. Portmadoc's harbour, the estuary of streams pouring from Snowdon through the pass of Aberglaslyn, and from corries to the east of this, is well sheltered by the steep hill, Moel-y-Gest, which rises to 861 feet, and makes the outlook across to Harlech seem merely a short distance away.

Portmadoc is comparatively a new town. With Tremadoc it came into existence in the years when George III was King. Up to that time, the great salt marsh outside the Glaslyn gorge was filled at every tide, and streams ran as they would in its reedy mass. William Alexander Madock, M.P., was aware that in 1625 Sir John Wynn, of Gwydir, had proposed to Sir Hugh Myddelton to reclaim this land by building an embankment across the estuary between two rocky promontories. Madock carried out his scheme at the cost of £100,000 and added seven thousand acres to the estate. The poet Shelley was engaged as a sort of publicity agent for the scheme, and lived at Ty'n-yr-Alt, just at the end of the Beddgelert

Under Snowdon's Lee

gorge. His activities were not liked by the Welsh, who did not wish any change to be made in their marsh, and some of the neighbours planned to give the offensive writer a scare. Shelley believed that he was driven from home by pistol shots, but the local idea was somewhat on the lines of horse-play which caused more terror than inconvenience. Anyway, the Welsh won a partial victory, for Shelley abandoned his pamphleteering for the drainage scheme, and with his young wife Harriet left Snowdonia for a sojourn in the Lakes, after which they drifted to London and elsewhere. There is good golf at Borth-y-Gest, round the shoulder of the Moel from Portmadoc. This is one of the idyllic little resorts of Wales, with splendid views of Snowdonia from its upraised common, and with fine bathing coves of clear sea-water among the rocks.

The Snowdon railway passes from Portmadoc across the marsh almost direct to Aberglaslyn, where it tunnels through the eastern rock wall and passes to the plain of Beddgelert. From that point it rises to the lonely tarn of Llyn-y-Gader and to Rhyd-ddu, where there are slate quarries, and descends by Llyn Quellyn to the main L.M.S. line, south of Carnarvon. The section through Beddgelert to Portmadoc has been opened since the Great War, and one wonders whether the project is really a success in these days of car and bus competition. It is admitted cheerfully that a passenger using the "Snowdon Line" must see,

Under Snowdon's Lee

on a clear day, some really fine scenery, but all the same he or she will miss much, especially in the pass where the river bursts through the narrow larch-hung gorge on its way from the hills.

The "toy railway" from Portmadoc to Blaenau Ffestiniog is infinitely more spectacular, though its termination among ghastly slate dumps is an anti-climax after creeping along the edges of deep ravines, straddling on spidery bridges, and climbing up steep ridges and inclines from the lower oak forests to the wild mountain rocks. The gauge is only two feet, the distance $13\frac{1}{4}$ miles, and in the last eight miles there is a difference in altitude of 700 feet. The rise is so well engineered that no section is steeper than 1 in 68, and there is no necessity to resort to rack-and-pinion tactics. The powerful little steam locos. send the long trains of passenger carriages and slate trucks up to the quarry villages in about one hour. The line was constructed for slate traffic in 1836, and was opened for passenger service in 1869.

The trip begins rather tamely : you ride across the street of Portmadoc from the slate wharf to the long embankment by which Mr. Madock reclaimed the marsh. About half-way across there is a startling view—the topmost cone of Snowdon rising very sharp and blue and high over the darker foothills. The next stretch of line travels the long rock ridge which divides the

Under Snowdon's Lee

Traeth Mawr from the Ffestiniog valley, and Cynicht is more prominent, now Snowdon has withdrawn. Soon there is a steep rise, with a remarkable curve, to Tan-y-Bwlch station, where there is a glorious hill-side march to Aberglaslyn and Beddgelert. Also, in the opposite direction, to the village of Maentwrog, which nestles in a nook of the lower Ffestiniog valley.

Gradually the train works its way through the oak forest, to the larch, birch, and Scots fir, with such narrow sweeps that at times it is possible to look across a scoop of mountain to your engine toiling up the further side, and with the rear of the train visible in the curve below. There are one or two tunnels, and then the train labours out on to a shelf of bare, rocky hillside, with only a distant view of marsh and the sea. Gradually the immense quarry tips of Blaenau Ffestiniog dominate the scene in front, and one finds the terminus rather a squalid and disorderly place, permeated with the unpleasant reek of fresh-riven slates. To the ordinary mortal, slate-quarrying is not an inspiring industry ; the works here can be inspected, and the wonderful dexterity with which the men split the blocks, almost like opening a book, can be admired. The slate business has an inevitably large margin of stone-waste, and the tips in Wales approach the height of hills and cut into pleasant coves, pastures and waterfalls. At Bethesda one of the best corners of the Carnedds is knocked to pieces ; equally dolorous is the case

Photo



THE MAENTWROG VALLEY

It lies on the way to Ffestiniog. This is one of the world's sweetest spots.

L M S.

Under Snowdon's Lee

of Llanberis, where even one lake is spoilt by the works of ruthless man ; Rhyd-ddu is becoming almost as bad ; Nantlle is worse ; and Blaenau Ffestiniog worst of all. But do not pass this condemnation to a Welsh passenger on the "Toy Railway" : he may annihilate you with excited arguments in his native tongue, and add in halting English, as he did in my presence, "If there is no work, then there is no food whateffer." In comparison with the hard sea-green and blue slates of the Lake Country, the Welsh quarries produce a softer and more workable material, often with a natural rich purple bloom. As a rule, Welsh slate is not so durable as English, and is more affected by the acids of coal smoke. For this reason the other is often chosen for very large and prominent roofs in our cities.

The return railway trip to Portmadoc is most exciting, for the train, weighed by many tons of slates, rattles down by its own impetus, and there is little of the slow grind and plucking couplings of the up-journey. It is brake-work all the way, and the train seems to shoot through tunnels and to swing in mid-air in wanton fashion over those deep gorges and narrow curves. There is little opportunity to take a quiet breath before Tan-y-Bwlch station is reached and the last steep drop to sea-level begins.

The old village of Ffestiniog is three miles from the great quarries, but it is mainly occupied by the slate workers. The road from this point

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by Maentwrog to Harlech is a joy. In a few miles one leaves the high moorland and the brotherhood of rocky mountain tops for the quiet sea level, with fine cattle grazing in the fields. Maentwrog is, one must maintain, one of the sweetest nooks in West Wales, retired from the quarry works and folks, and busily trying to believe that its Wales does not change, is unchangeable. The motors, however, have torn away its chance of ancient peace, for they come up by scores from Portmadoc and Harlech.

The miles along the level to Harlech are delightful, and that splendid old castle has been a dream to many of us ever since we first heard the music and words, in distant England, of "The March of the Men of Harlech." Here most things retain an ancient air; the village is the capital of Wales's wildest county, Merioneth, and at election times has a certain electoral standing. The outside walls and towers of the castle remain in good condition, and stand picturesquely on a huge crag platform, overlooking the sands and the sea. From the battlements there is a splendid outlook toward Snowdon. Harlech is another of Edward's great castles, built on a site used by Welsh princes ages before for their strongholds, in order to secure and overawe a land where reconquest was still to be feared. It follows the plan of Carnarvon, Conway, and Beaumaris, but is not equal to the two first-named. During the Wars of the Roses Harlech was held by an Earl of

Under Snowdon's Lee

Pembroke, who declared that he held a castle in France until the old women of that land all knew of it, and he intended to do the same in Wales. However, his garrison was conquered by hunger. In the Civil War Harlech was the last stronghold to hold out for the King. Why it was not "slighted" by Parliament, like most other Royal castles, is not known, but the four-square pile has suffered severely from centuries of neglect and decay, and the outside is much better preserved than the interior.

Because of its remoteness, the Harlech country is probably the least frequented part of North Wales. Hundreds of motorists each summer spin along the coast road, visit the old castle, perhaps take a little golf on the finest links in Wales, without discovering that the great mountain wall to the east has ever so many little breaches and passes by which a car can reach the innermost coves of the land and find a really old-world countryside where visitors and excursionists, and even population, are scanty. The hills around these little vales have not the rugged height of Snowdonia or the Arans, but they make very good walking indeed. Some of the paths, such as the Roman Steps, are picturesque indeed, and there is an old road down the hills to the Mawdach which has been a great track for centuries.

One is tempted to leave Harlech at that, but really the area has some fine scenery and quaint farms and hamlets. The five miles' walk from

Under Snowdon's Lee

Llanbedr or Harlech up the Artro valley to lonely Cwm Bychan and the walk back from the Roman Steps by the Drws Ardudwy is one of the best combinations of sweetness and rocky wilderness in Wales.



Photo

CADER IDRIS FROM THE DOLGELLEY ROAD

The highest point in the ridge is to the right of centre. The Foxes' Path is the steep white band of scree or broken stones which goes up to the left of the riven rocks below the summit. There is some poor rock-climbing on this face; but the real sporting crags are on the far side of the mountain, overlooking Tal-y-llyn.

Print

CHAPTER IX

THE GREAT RIFT—BARMOUTH TO CORWEN

TO most people the natural boundary of North Wales is the definite "rift" or depression which extends through the mountains from Cardigan Bay to the English Border, along the line of the Mawddach, the Wnion, and the Dee. It is sixty miles of most interesting and varied country, giving first the glories of a tidal estuary, then an incline past Dolgelley, a short stretch of low moor above Drws-y-Nant, then by the tumbling Little Dee to the llyn at Bala, greatest natural sheet of water in Wales, and the gorge of its outlet stream, the Dee, which passes beneath forests and rocky hills to Corwen of Owen Glyndwr, and through the Berwyn gap to Llangollen. On either side the trench is hedged with high mountains—on the north by Llawr Llech, 1930 feet; Y Garn, 2063 feet; Rhobell Fawr, 2408 feet; Arenig Fawr, 2806 feet; and the moorland ridges which culminate in Moel-y-Gamelin, 1897 feet, after which comes that curious limestone intrusion, the Eglwseg Rocks, rising to about 1600 feet. On the south of the trench the chief mountains are Cader Idris, 2927 feet; Aran Mawddwy, 2870 feet; and Aran Benllyn,

The Great Rift

2901 feet ; with the long Berwyn range, chiefly heather and grass moor, rising to 2713 feet at Moel Sych and 2572 feet at Cader Fronwen. And into these glorious hills Nature has cut some really wonderful glens, and, on the south in particular, wild passes to Dinas Mawddwy, to Vyrnwy, and to the Ceiriog. On the north the roads and moors are less hostile, for the valleys slope more easily into the great plateau which sends the waters to the north coast.

Barmouth, the first outpost of the trench, is not an historic spot. For centuries it was chiefly known as the ferrying point across the Mawddach tide for the few travellers who ventured along the coast road. The house which has renown as the meeting place of several conspirators who plotted the uplift of Henry VII to the English throne is rather suspect in these days. The architecture belongs to a period two or three centuries later. To-day the holiday population of Barmouth is counted by hundreds, and the tangle of houses between the cliff and the sea can scarce lodge them all. The sea is a trouble to Barmouth, for at times the heavy tides threaten the outer esplanade, but buttresses and groins are rapidly placed after each assault. Barmouth itself is a trim and cleanly, but not distinctive, townlet : it is the surroundings that count. The very cliff, Dinas Oleu, against which the road and rail have cramped the native quarter, is a wonderful viewpoint, and its ascent can be made by tracks at

The Great Rift

any angle. This ground was probably the first dedicated to public use by the societies which were founded under the teachings of John Ruskin, societies which rapidly changed their plans and disappeared, leaving an active legacy, the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty, which now holds sacred many thousand acres of England and Wales.

The view from the whole hillside of Dinas Oleu is glorious. There is also a fine estuarine outlook from the railway bridge, across which there is a toll-path (used by cycles and motor-cycles) connecting with the coast road to Towyn and Aberystwyth. The finest view of all is from the Panorama Walk, a stroll of about twenty minutes, and some steepness, from the town. From this the estuary at full tide looks like a green lake, trimmed with silver, and the great mass of Cader Idris, seen against the light, is either a blue or a purple marquee fit for a king in those old days of myth and legend. The lower hills near the tidal lake are broken and irregular; they are also beautifully coloured in themselves, and the leaf-age, even in late summer, has still a touch of gold and silver, perhaps from belts and patches of ragwort or gorse or cotton grass, but still lovely. One can watch this spectacle hour by hour, day after day, for its colour and spirit is ever-changing. One has seen the great snow squalls of March sweep up the tideway, touching the hills with white, the dark rocks with glistening water;

The Great Rift

one has watched a day of sunshine in May when every catspaw of the warm breeze seemed to be a flash of iridescence; one has watched, on a dark October day, when a sudden flash of sunshine, through travelling clouds, transfigured the entire scene to something approaching a heavenly region, radiant with rainbow colours on the trees, the marsh, and hanging in the mist which hid the glorious tent of Cader.

There are many other walks round Barmouth: one, by the Mawddach shore, which is sadly over-motored in summer; and up the ridges in every direction. Of course, there is a nook of a port at Barmouth and a few fisherfolk, whose boats ferry passengers to an island or the south sands, but the rock ridges are the greatest delight. The Mawddach road gives access to many pretty vales, and by climbing the steep upper lanes, one finds another world, of sheep tracks and ancient routes leading to cromlechs, hut circles, and ancient camps. Once again one is given the impression that ancient Wales, before the fens were drained and the forests cleared, must have been fully populated indeed.

The great trip from Barmouth is, of course, to the top of Cader Idris, 2927 feet, the walk toward which should be shortened by taking train to Arthog, and then climbing a steep lane to the top of the foothills, after which one passes near two small pools, crosses the old Towyn road, and finds a well-marked and easy path—steep



Photo

C. Beaumont

MAWDDACH ESTUARY, FROM THE PRECIPICE WALK, DOLGELLEY

The river winds through meadow and woodland to the most beautiful arm of the sea in Wales. The broken hillsides are seamed with lovely waterfalls.



The Great Rift

at first, but quite easy later—to the summit. The rather notorious Foxes' Path, which is very abrupt and up loose beds of stones, is part of the Dolgelley track up the mountain, and is only seen from above by the Barmouth climbers. One's personal experiences on Cader Idris do not include a clear day, and once indeed we traversed it in blinding and cold rain. A gale on Cader is no joke, but the climber who is alert to the piles of broken stones which show the track should meet with no difficulty. With snow on the hills the going may be dangerous, and any but experienced parties are well advised to stay away. The top of the long rise from the Towyn road to the ridge is shown by a couple of upright stones—my only error on Cader Idris came actually after descent to this point, when somehow a sheep track leading into the mist was picked up. The detour was not without compensation, as it brought me into touch with a party of shepherds who were sheltering in a ruined cottage and showed me a track over the ridge at a different point. The Foxes' Path comes up the steep side of a rock basin which holds a gloomy tarn or pool, and is, like all loose tracks, easier to climb than to descend. Parties find themselves on a shattered and apparently precipitous slope, and lose courage. Deaths from exposure and mishap have occurred here, so that a warning is necessary. However, under ordinary conditions there should be no peril. Legend says that a man

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who lies a night on the summit of Cader Idris must awaken either a bard or an idiot. The only effect in my case has been a profound worship of the mountain as a haunt of great beauty; it is truly a magic tent, a covering for giants, and this impression is most prominent as one rambles on the ridges in sharp starlight, with the mist waving its banners just beneath one's feet. One stands isolated in the soft bronze gloom, and the world below with its worries and trials is forgotten.

Compared with Cader Idris, all the other ascents within reach of Barmouth are tame, but Diphws is a ridge worth walking if only to spy out from above all the sites of ancient habitations, cromlechs, and the like. Its views towards Cader are not very good, because the sea foreground soon disappears, and there is only the last thousand feet in sight. The view northward up the shore toward Harlech shows the waves breaking at low tide over the shingle beds which form Sarn Padraig, the road of St. Patrick, which according to ancient legend was really a massive sea-wall, protecting hundreds of thousands of acres of rich farm land, a warrior province. The Lost Hundred went beneath the tide at last because a drunken king and court neglected its defences. At Barmouth to-day we have evidence enough and to spare near the esplanade and the school of the terrific strength a storm can give to the tide.

Along the Mawddach road to Dolgelley the

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land of gold is entered. From earliest history ornaments of Welsh gold are mentioned, and most of the material was brought from the hills of Merioneth.

The Mawddach is a land of waterfalls, and also of auriferous ledges, some of which have been pulverized with fair results. The hillsides are covered with signs of ancient works, and some have been used within recent years. Near the beautiful Pistyll Cain, a well-hidden waterfall of 150 feet, is an abandoned mine, the Gwyn-fynydd, which was more or less at work until recent years. The Prince Edward mine further up the same valley, towards Trawsfynydd, has also had its day, though now and again "surface finds" here stimulate the old craving for the gold-bearing rocks. Above Bont-Ddu is the old St. David's gold and copper mine, which was reopened in 1919, but no great success was announced. Undoubtedly there is gold in the rocks, but it is fugitive stuff, and more money is spent on the process of working than the proceeds repay.

The gold-bearing lodes are impregnated with minute grains of precious metal, which sometimes, in the "clusters," become visible to the naked eye. Welsh gold in its natural form is still treasured by some great families who have local interests, and the wedding rings of Princess Mary and H.R.H. the Duchess of York were made from the offerings of such persons.

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We are assured that the first drift of population toward the western sea and Ireland came this way, and that on the heels of these primitive people came men with swords of bronze, and they discovered precious gold either among the hills of Merioneth, where it is still sought to-day, or over in Wicklow, where more than a century and a half ago there were large and profitable surface workings. Later this was the land of the Welsh princes, who summoned parliaments from south and north and east to Dolgelley, and made treaties with France and Scotland, in which matters against England were boldly discussed. Finally, it was the province of Owen Glyndwr, that Welsh warrior who was unfortunate enough to be matched against the skill and valour of the young English prince who later became King Henry V, and subdued France to an English province, with the French Crown for his succession. In Owen's time the bards declared that his town of Dolgelley was protected by a wall a mile high and twenty miles in circuit, being the great circle of the Arenigs, Arans and Cader Idris.

Here, protected by the great hills, the bards of old Wales sang their prophecies, their wonderful allegories, and their stinging parables. Judging from translations and discussions, the Welsh bards were always politicians, "at the heart of things," and their messages to the King, Court, and people were often caustically direct. And the old songs reveal, among the floods of eulogy,



Photo

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UPPER FALLS OF THE MYNACH, DEVIL'S BRIDGE

After heavy rain the series of cascades appear as a broad white streak over the face of the rocks. A recess by the side of the falls is known as the Robbers' Cave, where two brothers and their sister lived undiscovered during a long career of robbery and murder.



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a few rocks of criticism, and a tide of urging to fresh activities. The old-time bard apparently was convinced that it would be pleasanter for his prince to wear out in energetic action than to rust away among his friends and courtiers.

The modern bards of Wales are poets and philosophers, rather than men in commanding position of affairs. Times have changed, and it is no longer considered proper to advise a chief or monarch, furiously to urge national reforms, and a sterner use of princely power. Perhaps, as some Welsh critics say, the princes and chieftains have worn away, and the poets too have swords of song so rusted that they cannot now be loosened from the scabbard, let alone used with a will. To English county folk, accustomed to consider their dialect poets as mere public-house rhymesters, the position of the modern Welsh bard is a surprisingly high one, but really it is impossible to compare closely the poets of a language like the Welsh, with all its rich stores of literature, with even the greater of county dialects. In England we should be startled if a dialect bard demanded an audience for a whole evening's recital in poetry and prose. Wales, however—and rightly—views the work of its literary men and bards in the native tongue in a more generous light.

The tiny old town of Dolgelley is wonderfully placed among the hills, in the midst of a gloriously coloured strath or glen. Its greatest glories lie

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away from the houses—an excellent route by a gorge toward Cader Idris, the torrent walk up a branch of the Wnion, and two or three elevated bridle tracks which are “Precipice Walks” for the lovers of mild sensation. The best of these is approached from the Bala road, by Llyn Cynwick, and skirts the top of the great deep gorge of the Eden for a couple of miles. The round is about eight miles. There is real beauty of vale and wood and hillside, and the district all round is as rich in the camps, forts, etc., of the ancient Welsh as it well can be. It pleases nobody, least of all the writer of these lines, to be asked to compare Dolgelley of Wales with Grasmere of Wordsworthshire—the parallel is unfair, for one has a glorious lake, is in a cup among fair hills; the other is merely near an arm of the sea, and is not so fine.

The great trench we are tracing continues up the Wnion. Road and rail run close to the river, with here and there a side-trail striking into some secluded glen of small farms or over the Bwlch Oerddrws toward Tal-y-Llyn and Dinas Mawddwy. The great peaks above Drws-y-Nant are the Arans, from this side mainly a wall of sheep walks and showing little sign of the narrow and stony ridge which goes north and south, of the dark coves which face east, and from which spring the Mawddwy and other streams. To the north is Rhobell Fawr (2408 feet), but its front is masked by tiny but nearer

Photo

LOOKING DOWN INTO LANBERIS PASS

The rocky foreground is in striking contrast with the peaceful little farms in the trench beneath. The great slate quarries, with their aprons of discarded rubbish, add a somewhat unpleasant feature to this outlook.

G. W. R.



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bluffs. When we near Llanuchllyn, the steep spur of Aran Benllyn rises with a fine front and soaring top. Hereabouts we reach the true Dee, which rises in some undistinguished bog far up the side of Ddualt (2155 feet). The highest point on the road between Dolgelley and Bala is only 770 feet above the sea, and the gradients are easy, though the hills are long.

The great llyn of Bala, the largest natural water in Wales, is now in view, and here one must halt to explain. Welsh natives declaim the beauty of the lake ; personally the writer does not rank it highly, and rather inclines to compare the surrounding scenery with a reach of Father Thames—suave and peaceful, rather than striking in character. Of the English lakes, perhaps the mild and retiring Esthwaite Water is nearest. But the scenes by road and rail and waterside are very lovely for all that. As a lover of fish and fishing, the writer has watched trout and salmon, and even made acquaintance with the silvery gwyniad or freshwater herring, which is also found in Ullswater in far-off Westmorland.

This upper vale of Dee is pre-eminently Welsh—one finds the language, mannerisms and sympathies at every turn. The little town of Bala once had an Edwardian castle, but it has entirely disappeared. Disappeared, too, has one wicked town which, for its sins, was submerged in the deeps of the lake. The modern folk of Bala keep their houses and streets away from

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temptation of a free bath for the most part, and for further safety have built chapels in large numbers. One does not say, however, that Bala folk are at all wicked: the village-town is really a pleasant place for a sojourn, and the people do their best to add to your pleasure. But they regret that the old days, when English peers were their guests, are no more. One wonders whether some holiday duty should not be laid on the new generation of titled and prominent folk to "patronize" villages in their own land, and learn something of the people which cannot be discovered in casual motor-runs from distant hotels.

After Bala the Dee is a quiet, amiable summer-stream, winding through meadows most of the peaceful way to Corwen, where the great Holyhead road is reached, and where in a few miles one can run out to the grouse moors of Cerrig-y-Drudion and Pentre Voelas, and drop down a steep winding incline to the Conway at Bettws-y-Coed. From Bala to Corwen the hamlets are very Welsh, and the country is mostly given over to sheep and black cattle, a great market for which is found in Corwen, the home of Owen Glyndwr. There is a walk through the old fir woods of the vale of Edeirion from Bala to Corwen which is better than the ordinary road. The vale, it is asserted, gave Tennyson the landscape pictures for his *Geraint and Enid* in the *Idylls*.

With its population of nearly three thousand

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people, Corwen is double the size of Bala, and the greatest town between Llangollen and Cardigan Bay. Its prosperity is largely due to the railway industry, the sheds of which considerably jar the eye in outlooks around the town. However, much may be forgiven which keeps Welsh sons and daughters profitably employed in their native land instead of losing happiness and national joy by removing to other places under the British flag—Manchester and Liverpool to wit. It was at Corwen that Owen Glyndwr assembled his army for the campaign which ended at the Battle of Shrewsbury in the year 1403. There are many legends of the masterful ally of Hotspur and Mortimer. On a stone over the south door of the chancel of Corwen church is the mark of a cross that, according to tradition, is the impress of Owen's dagger, which he flung down the adjacent cliff when in a passion caused by some quarrel with the townsmen.

CHAPTER X

THE GREAT RIFT—(*continued*)

FROM experience one prefers the walk along the north bank of Dee as an approach from Corwen to Llangollen. It is mainly a fine old lane with few levels and fewer straights, a place where the motor-car is an intrusion. Telford's main road on the south bank goes through the countryside with Glyndwr associations, passes the bunch of trees on a mound which marks the palace lost by this Welsh patriot, slants over the shoulder of the Berwyn, and drops into Llangollen by a splendid two-mile hill. That is all—the road engineers have so hacked and polished the way that it lacks everything of interest (except as a place for rapid progress) to the rambler, and by high August it is sometimes so deep in grits that the cyclist goes in peril of a capsize. On the other side, the lane from Corwen is at first merely charming, with the Dee moving sweetly below, and the great moors of Berwyn aflame with heather, but afterwards—words almost fail. The great level of the Vale of Edeirion runs up to a mass of hill, and through these the Dee winds and pushes its way. The Dee is quite well-mannered about the stupid

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curves and defiles among the oak-woods it is compelled to pass, and goes prettily along, now in short rushes, now in quiet pools, but the quick eye will see in the bushes wreckage of leaves and grass which prove that in winter floods this mild-mannered water is fractious, and somewhat boisterous and tyrannical. There are salmon and trout in those great pools and reaches, and one may spend an hour watching their evolutions in the stream, if one is lucky. Even here, the Dee cannot be called the clearest and brightest stream of Wales, but it has colour and character. Great forests of oak, armies of larch and spruce, and Scots fir, strings of elm and silver birch, with here and there a nook of meadow, or a cataract where some hillside rivulet bounds down, here and there a farm, a cottage or two—and far too often railway dust and cinders blowing on the deep pools. The north lane to Llangollen keeps aloof from the railway, climbs up and tumbles down steep tree-hung slopes, and for a half a mile at a time terraces above the timber line, giving splendid views through the Berwyn gorge to the Eglwyseg Rocks and Dinas Bran above Llangollen. Rhewl is the first village, then comes Llantysilio with its famous little church, the much over-rated Horseshoe of Dee which is merely a low weir to turn the river into the canal, and not a cascade at all. From this point one is tempted to follow the canal to Llangollen, and really it is worth while. This canal bank is the

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best artificial promenade in Wales, which is open to the public free of charge, and it commands several lovely views of the gorge and dashing river.

The village-town of Llangollen has earned praise from George Borrow and John Ruskin for its situation, and it has been condemned by other visitors, famous and otherwise, for its limitations, with and without reason. Every generation has said that the place is over-built; yet more villas are being spilt across the little cove and among the hills. Somehow the charm remains secret which allures us again and again to the place. The ancient bridge over the Dee is really the best thing in the town, for the church seems rather dark and niggardly and is almost alien in appearance. In these days the "Ladies" have but little interest, and their Plas Newydd, with a "Druid's Circle" or Gorsedd stones on the outer lawn, has few remaining relics of the two Irish ladies of quality who a century ago decided to settle here and live a life of equable friendship together rather than risk their separate lives on the stormy seas of love. They could not be recluses at Llangollen, for it was then alive with coach traffic and great travellers passed along every day of the year by post-chaise and coach toward Holyhead and Ireland. Their visitors included all the great people of their time, from princes to poets, dukes, members of parliament, etc.



Photo

LLANGOLLEN BRIDGE

Underwood Press Service

Built in the 14th century by a Bishop of St. Asaph, this is one of the "Seven Wonders of Wales." Its sturdy yet graceful structure after six centuries carries heavy motor traffic without a tremor. The bridge is narrow, somewhat humpbacked, and on a busy holiday rather a dangerous promenade.

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As a centre for motor tours Llangollen is rather limited—you must go either north, up the Horse-shoe Pass to Ruthin and the North Coast, west to Corwen, or east to Chirk and England. There is a road through Ruabon and the coal country to Chester, but that is only used on necessity. There are lanes to Rhewl and to the “World’s End,” but the car is not at advantage in such narrow quarters. Walking is therefore the only good way, and Llangollen gives tours to suit all kinds of feet.

The obvious short walks are—(a) along the canal to Berwyn, already described; (b) along the canal in the opposite direction towards Chirk, a much quieter route which speedily descends to an English calm, and is abandoned at the Star crossing for a return by motor-bus along the Ruabon road (one would scarcely walk so far as the wonderful Aqueduct and the village of Vron beyond, for pleasure alone); (c) up Castell Dinas Bran, a steep knoll, reached by a path from the canal bridge, which is crowned by shattered walls, and though usually overcrowded gives a wonderful bird’s-eye view which extends from near Corwen on the west to the Pennine Hills of east Cheshire in the other direction, and includes Valle Crucis (not its abbey), the Eglwyseg cliff, and the wooded plain of Shropshire; (d) to Moel-y-Geraint or Barber’s Hill on the south of the town, a pretty walk through green plantation, with nice pictures

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of the village-town and its vale, but the "top" is disappointing, being merely the edge of the heavy Berwyn moors. Llangollen has a riverside park and a wee promenade, but needs a resolute Town-Planning Act which will secure the meadows near the stream against further intrusion and provide for their gradual return to the public possession as playgrounds. The whole stretch between the Corwen and Ruthin roads should be cleared as a national possession.

The longer strolls from Llangollen are beautiful; one can hardly go wrong anywhere. Walk along the canal toward Berwyn, and at Pentrefelin bridge turn on to the Ruthin road. In half a mile this reaches Valle Crucis Abbey, the finest Cistercian ruin in Wales. All around the hills are clothed with trees, the stream slides past beautiful meadows, and the soil seems sacred with the memory of great worship and great pilgrimages in the centuries that are past. The ruin is well worth examination, both by the casual visitor whose interest in monastic life is but passing and fugitive, and by the student of beauty in architecture and religion. The valley which extends north for three miles is full of interest. In a field not far from the abbey is Eliseg's pillar, a broken shaft over six feet high which was erected by the grandson in memory of one who fought in the great battle of Bangor Iscoed, in the year A.D. 607. The further recess of Pentredwr is very pretty, and the direct

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climb up the old road to the col which gives a view toward the Vale of Clwyd and the northern sea is worth while. Worth while, too, is the descent of the Horseshoe Pass, a three-mile incline which has eased the old route from Llangollen to Ruthin, in the first case for the service of the many slate quarries of the hills. The motorist whose car easily ascends the long slope from Valle Crucis to Bwlch Rhiwfelen, a thousand feet higher, has reason to be satisfied with the touring qualities of his machine. Equally the descent with a full load of passengers is a good test of brake power.

“World’s End” is a famous place about five miles of lane from Llangollen. The particular object is a cove cut deep into the yellow white of the Eglwyseg escarpment, with a crystal clear spring, and a gorge which ascends steeply through green conifers to the heathery Ruabon moors. There are two routes to a wee chapel beneath the long face of the “Rocks”: the first follows the Ruthin road for a couple miles, passing Valle Crucis Abbey, and turning to the right at the fork beyond the Britannia Inn, and right again to avoid a lane direct to Pentredwr. In half a mile of walking toward the Rocks, a little chapel is reached, and to this the other route has come from Llangollen over the canal bridge, and by a track which for quite a distance is next the scree of the limestone cliff. Now the route turns left; the lane becomes gradually less frequented,

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and finally one passes the picturesque half-timbered manor house which was once the country home of the native princes of Wales, as the names inscribed on the wall show. The track rises ever steeper to a spring pulsing through a shattered mass of limestone, in a corner well deserving the name of "World's End." Most ramblers seem to be satisfied here, but the scramble up through the trees, where pine needles slip along the wet clay, is worth while, though heavy. The wonderful view of peaks from Ruabon moor is worth coming miles to see—the range includes the Carnedds, the Glyders, Tryfan, Moel Siabod, Snowdon, the Arenigs and the Arans beyond Bala, with, of course, Moel Sych and Cadern Ffronwen and Berwyn across the moors opposite, and Moel y Gamelin, looking almost a peak, across the Horseshoe track. There is a possible return across the heathery moor and along the top edge of the Eglwyseg to a point somewhere south of Castell Dinas Bran, where a path slips down to another "Panorama Walk," and so returns to Llangollen in about ten miles of walking.

This "Panorama Walk" deserves to be better known, and would be if the further end were any other place than the industrial area toward Ruabon. Pass over the canal bridge, near the town, turn left, and follow the track past Castell Dinas Bran, to the Eglwyseg Rocks. The going is easy, and the track gradually rises above



Photo

G.W.E.

PLAS NEWYDD, LLANGOLLEN

This was for fifty years the home of two Irish ladies of noble blood who pledged themselves "to friendship, celibacy, and the knitting of blue stockings." The original cottage is almost hidden among additions by later tenants; but the old exterior carvings, collected from old manor houses, abbeys, ruins, in Border Wales, are interesting.

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Trevor to a great height, commanding a splendid view of the real lower Vale of Llangollen, where the Dee winds among tree-covered bluffs, and the hill-sides are clothed in beautiful natural trees. Personally one prefers that the return should also be made along the Panorama Walk, for then one notices many beauties which escaped when the face was turned in the other direction.

The ascent of Moel-y-Gamelin is really an easy matter: the Ruthin road is followed to the deepest curve of the Horseshoe Pass, and then a direct line outside a farm enclosure takes one in ten minutes up the remainder of the ascent. The views are splendid. The return can be varied by a direct descent to Llantysilio church, which is plainly visible below, or the tour continued over the next two heights, with a steep descent into a gorge near Rhewl. Indeed, in any direction these beautiful moorish hills are amenable to the foot of the scrambler—they offer no difficulties and no dangers.

The great route to the south of the town is that which goes over the ridge to Glyn Ceiriog; there are many variations, but practically all include the pull up a rough track (on which motor-cyclists try their skill and the strength of their machines at intervals), rising at a gradient of 1 in 3 at places. At the cross-roads above this, the right-hand route goes across the moors to Corwen, and in heather time one can have a splendid time along its grass and bog. The

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left-hand slants over to Chirk and the lower part of the Ceiriog, and the drop in front is a steep precipice to the village of Glyn. In miles the distance from Llangollen is small, but two hours is pretty tolerable going for most people—especially on the return.

The Ceiriog stream drains a great area of the Berwyns, most of it rather unimposing heather and grass moor, with deep gorges such as that of the Tarw to bring down the rivulets. The going from Glyn to Llanarmon is a pretty bit of road, but there is no negotiable road out of the top of the valley, though there are various paths aiming at Llandrillo, above Corwen, in the Dee valley. There is a good walking road over the hills towards Vyrnwy by Llanrhaiadr and Hirnant. In the other direction there is choice of roads and even a tiny railroad down the Ceiriog from Glyn to Chirk. The latter part of the journey near the grounds of Chirk Castle is quite pretty.

For a couple of miles east of Llangollen the Vale of Dee is flushed with an orderly beauty which won the heart of John Ruskin, but as the hills end at Vron and Acrefair, the scene also changes. Except for odd scraps of Welsh, one might as well be fifty miles east in the Staffordshire coal-fields. There is grit and gloom in the air from distant Ruabon, Johnstown, and Wrexham, and coal is being worked here and there in near-by parishes. The population is largely made up of mining folk, and the shepherds and farmers of

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the hills are rarely seen. It is usual to point out that the Dee gorge is crossed by two great bridges, one made by Telford to carry the canal, and the other by Stephenson for the railway, but personally one has far more interest in the fact that hereabouts we cross the fighting border, with Offa's Dyke defending Wales and Watt's Dyke saving the English from casual incursions. Though there was both national and parochial peace here centuries before the fighting ceased on our northern border, there is still legend of stiff battles, and every parish almost has its ruined fort or camp. Chirk is a stronghold which vies with Chester as a spear-point of attack against Wales, though it is inside the geographical frontier and should have been friendly to the Welsh; Oswestry, Shrewsbury, Powis, Montgomery, there is a string of fortified towns all devoted to dominating the turbulent nation to the west. Each castle was the centre of an earldom, the revenue of which was enjoyed so long as the holder kept the border under control. Many of these ancient earls had their own armies and never ceased to patrol the outlets of the vales. Yet so local and partial was their domination that the vales ten miles from rural England were incurably Welsh and remain so.

There is some fine country in the folds of the central moorland of Wales. The Ceiriog, which comes down to the Dee past Chirk, has been mentioned; the Tanat is a tributary of the Severn,

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and in a narrow trough at its head, under the impending summit of Moel Sych, there is the wonderful waterfall of Pistyll Rhaiadr, which many believe to be the best of its kind in Wales, falling from the moors to the forest in one pitch of 210 feet. In another groove of the mountains to the south is Lake Vyrnwy, artificial but still a beauty worth visiting, though the way to it passes through a slice of England and is full of hills and awkward twists. From Vyrnwy there is a wild road across the central moors which finally reaches the Bwlch-y-Groes, the top of the rough road which passes north to Lake Bala and south to Dinas Mawddwy and Machynlleth. Vyrnwy is the centre for quite a wild bit of moorland, but the distances are sometimes rather large for the ordinary tourist, and accommodation is not easy to find in the drainage area of the lake beyond that offered by the great hotel.

CHAPTER XI

DOWN CARDIGAN BAY TO ABERYSTWYTH

FOR the remaining section of Northern Wales, from the Mawddach to Aberystwyth, a few notes must suffice. The northern face of Cader Idris has already been described from Dolgelley and Barmouth, and Arthog shares some of the glories (beyond its marsh) of the finest river-estuary in Britain. The coast-line down to Towyn is mainly sandy morfa or marsh, and the little village-town is a respectable place for handling slate traffic rather than of historic interest.

At Aberdovey a ridge strikes down to the sea, but the village is jammed between cliff and railway, and its progress of late years has not been marked. There are a number of good short excursions. Recent bathing tragedies have given the Dyfi shore a bad name; in every estuary there are known quicksands and tidal rips and deep pools; and the establishment of bathing places and boys' camps at such points should not be permitted.

The vales of Dyfi and its tributary streams are attractive. This country has great historic interest—Machynlleth has its parliament house.

Down Cardigan Bay

and it was here that the crown of Wales was offered to Owen Glyndwr—also where he was nearly assassinated by a traitor in the pay of his enemies. The hill-sides to the south of Dyfi have been rich in silver and lead ores, and ancient workings are still visible in the woods and glens. On the north there are the slate quarries of Corris, and through the glen is access to Tal-y-llyn, the prettiest lake in Wales. Hardly a mile long, its position among mountains and wooded slopes is really lovely.

Above the lake rises the steep south wall of Cader Idris, where the rock-climbers have exploited some difficult routes. The walking route from the hotel at the lake-foot rises gradually to the ridge from the west, and is not exciting. The deep scoop of Llyn-y-Cae is only seen from above and far away. From Minffordd the route requires a good deal of care in misty weather. From Llyn-y-Cae the track to the summit is steeper and more exposed than the Foxes' Path on the north side of the mountain. However, there is one great difference; if the rambler here finds real difficulty in ascent or descent, it is right to assume that the proper route has been missed, and a return should be made to better ground. No one needs to descend from Cader by Llyn-y-Cae on a misty or stormy day, and the upward route is always easier to keep.

The upper Dyfi comes from the Arans by a long and deep trench, past Llan-y-Mawddwy, Dinas



Photo

Underwood Press Service

GORGE AT DEVIL'S BRIDGE, NEAR ABERYSTWYTH

The waters of the Rheidol are seen pouring out of a narrow rocky gorge in a small cascade. The thick timber on the hills adds to the glory of a view which is almost unique in Wales.

Down Cardigan Bay

Mawddwy and Mallwyd. This is a wild area to-day, but formerly it was the haunt of bandits who dared to shoot a Judge of Assize in his carriage, in the hope that justice on some of their captured friends would be defeated. The river actually rises in a nook high up Aran Mawddwy, and almost immediately forms a fine little tarn, before tumbling in a series of cascades down the pass to cultivated land. Bwlch-y-Groes, mentioned once or twice before in this book, is an entrance to the Mawddwy ; it seems to be a sort of Charing Cross for the wildest mountain roads in Wales.

Another pass from Dinas Mawddwy goes west to Dolgelley by the famous Cross Foxes Inn, with a branch (sometimes blocked by landslides in winter) down to Tal-y-llyn.

From Machynlleth to Aberystwyth the country is again of the ordinary type ; protected by the great hills and moors to the east, it was in warrior times a granary of food and a home where warriors were bred and trained for battle. Borth has its golf and a wonderful beach, and the shore approach to Aberystwyth is along high cliffs, with a definite breach at the Vale of Clarach.

Aberystwyth itself occupies a flat where the Rheidol and Ystwyth streams enter the bay. It appears to be somewhat cramped in its site, but there are no picturesque slums. The ruins of the old castle, finally "slighted" by Oliver's

Down Cardigan Bay

men, occupy a rock fronting the sea, in the centre of the town, and near it is one of the University Colleges of Wales with a National Library and Museum which, to the visitor, are perhaps more important. Aberystwyth has no rival town in West Wales, and therefore deports itself as the metropolis it really is by comparison. The religious movements for miles are ordered from offices and secretaries here ; and the musical and literary life of West Wales depends on the lead of the University town. Constitution Hill to the north of the bay gives a wonderful outlook to the Llyn peninsula, Anglesey, Ireland, and Pembrokeshire far to the south. Cader Idris and parts of Snowdonia are also visible. As a town Aberystwyth is very clean, indeed, and attractive though circumscribed as though the buildings feared to stray away from the central mass round the railway stations. It is not so Welsh as Carnarvon or Dolgelley. There is a large permanent colony from England, many of whom are Welsh folk of the second generation who have never acquired or practise the home tongue, and University intercourse is not so entirely in Welsh as some patriots would wish. As a resort Aberystwyth is very pleasant, though a south-wester even in high summer can make the front almost untenable. The cliff scenery to the south is fine, but the great excursion from the town is up the Rheidol valley by road or light railway to the Devil's Bridge, where the

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stream has cut a deep groove in the rocks, and is spanned by bridges—the lowest of which carries an ancient footpath across the roaring gulf. The great rift is certainly one of the finest sights in Wales, and should not be missed.



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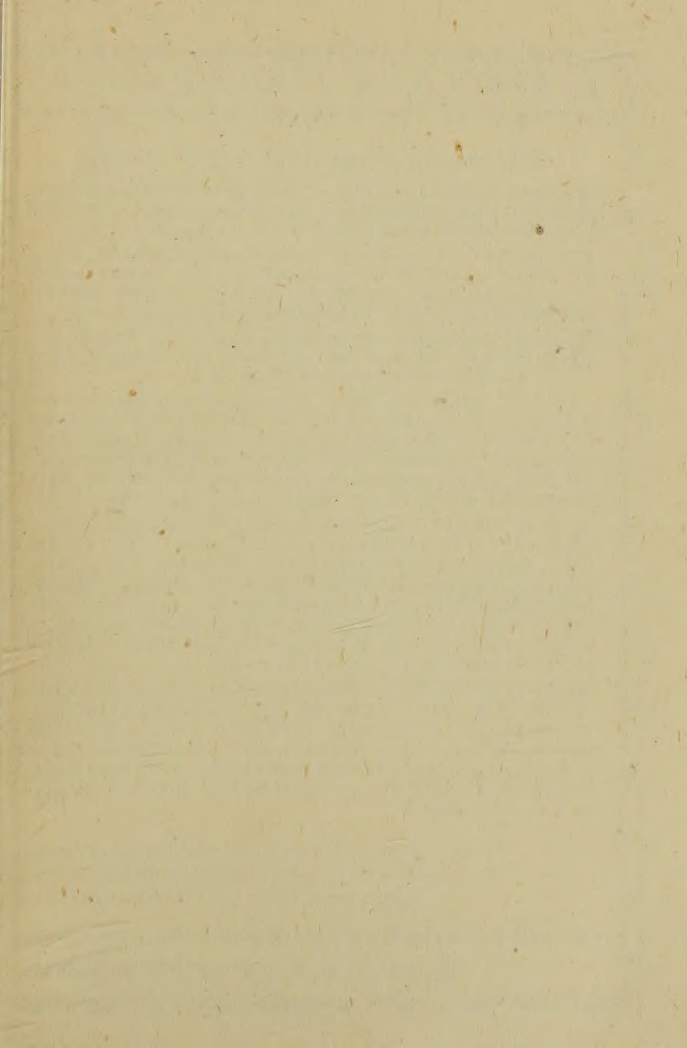
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